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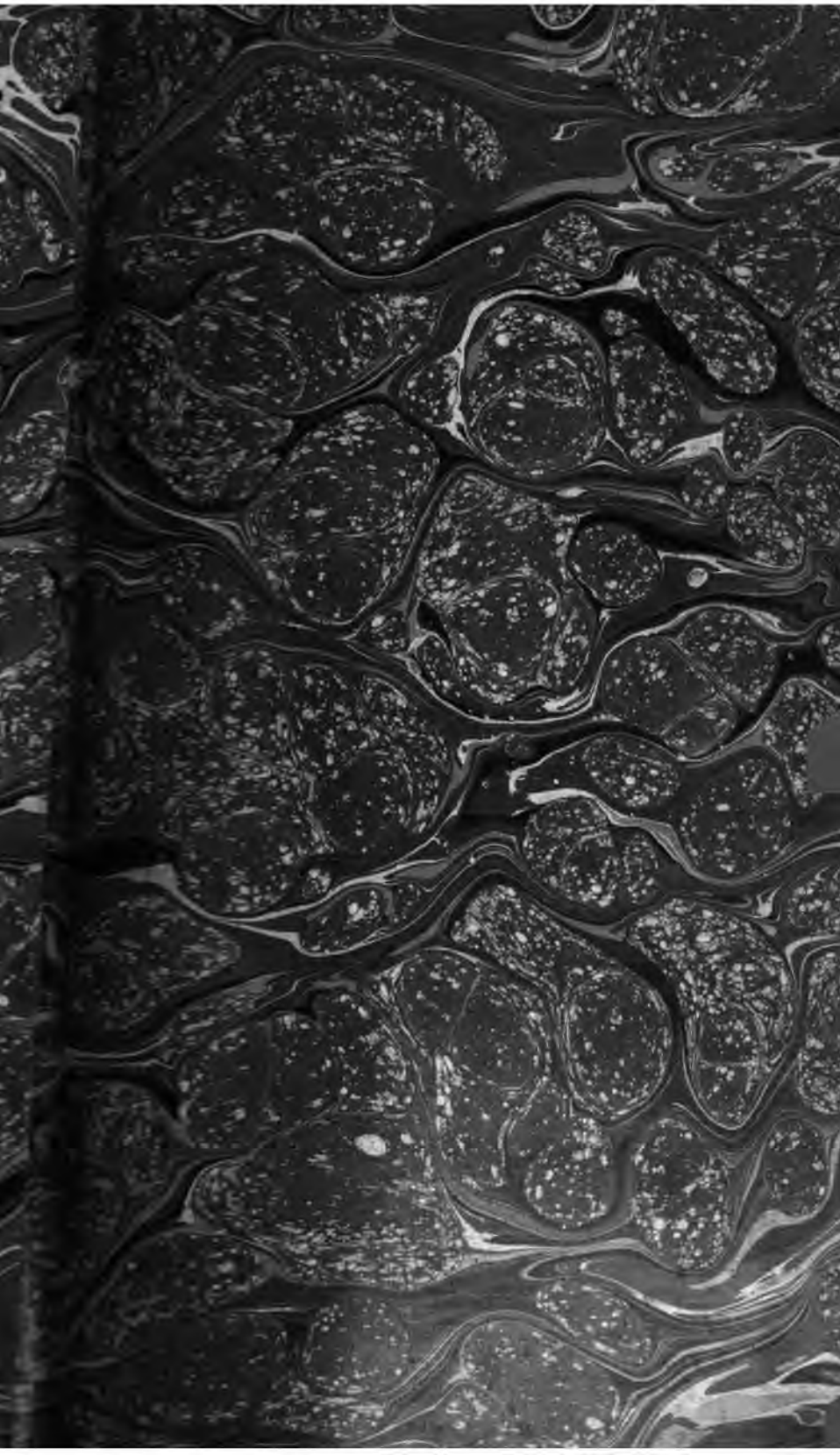
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AN
ILLUSTRATION
OF THE
DOCTRINES
OF
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
WITH RESPECT TO
FAITH AND PRACTICE.
UPON THE PLAN OF
THE ASSEMBLY'S SHORTER CATECHISM,
Comprehending a complete Body of Divinity.

By the late Rev. and Learned
MR. THOMAS BOSTON,
*Minister of the Gospel at Ettrick; Author of the Fourfold State,
A View of the Covenants, &c.*

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Hold fast the form of sound words.—2 Tim. i. 13.

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CONTENTS

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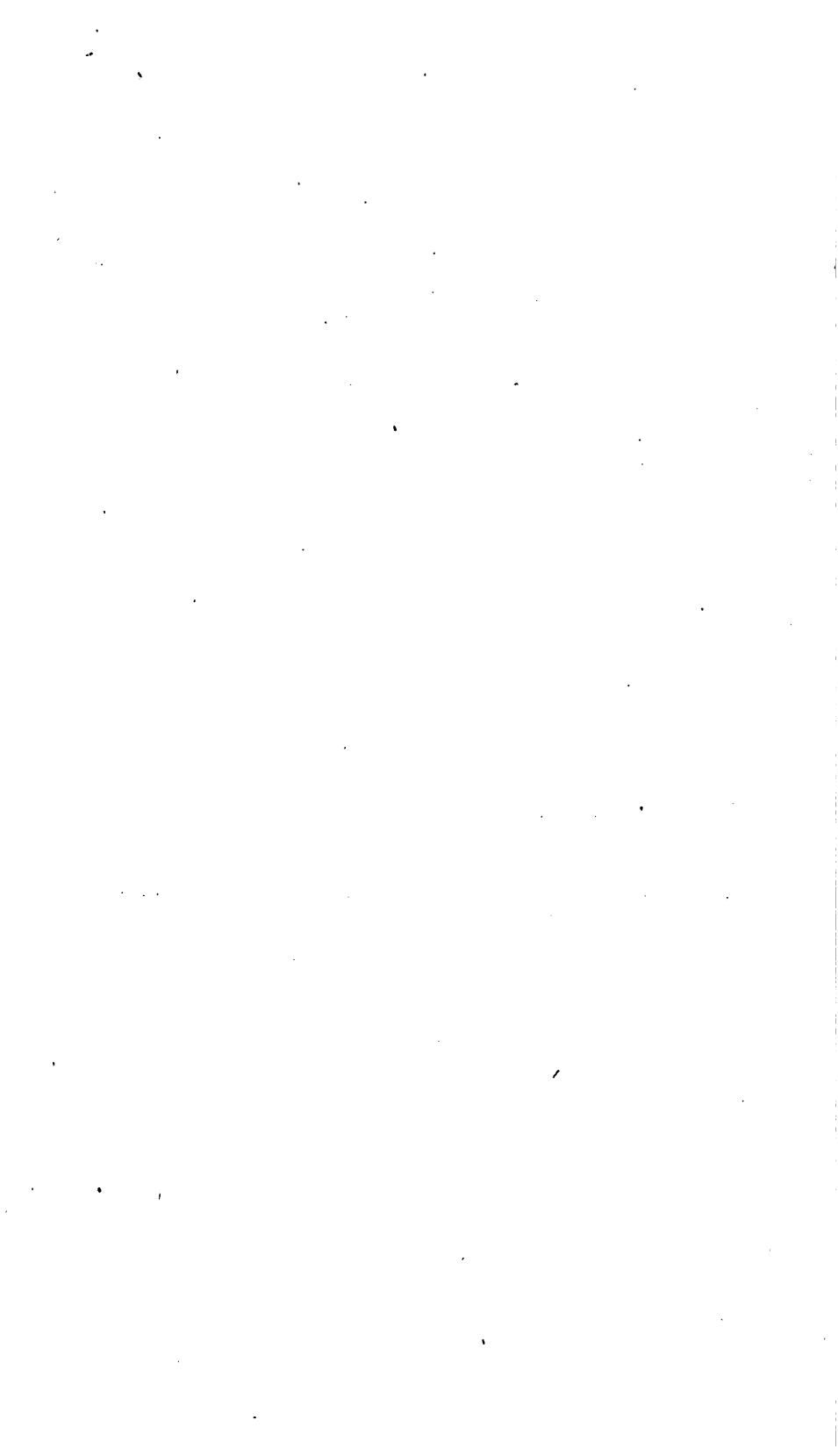
FIRST VOLUME.

| | |
|---|--------|
| <i>Of Man's chief end and happiness</i> | Page 1 |
| <i>The divine authority of the scriptures</i> | 12 |
| <i>The utility of the scriptures as a rule</i> | 34 |
| <i>The scope of the scriptures</i> | 39 |
| <i>The scriptures the book of the Lord, and the diligent study and search thereof recommended</i> | 55 |
| <i>Of God and his perfections</i> | 79 |
| <i>Of the unity of God</i> | 141 |
| <i>Of the Holy Trinity</i> | 154 |
| <i>Of the decrees of God</i> | 161 |
| <i>Of the work of creation</i> | 182 |
| <i>Of the creation of man</i> | 193 |
| <i>Of the providence of God</i> | 203 |
| <i>The wise observation of providences, illustrated and enforced</i> | 212 |
| <i>Of the covenant of works</i> | 253 |
| <i>Of the fall of our first parents</i> | 268 |
| <i>Of sin in general</i> | 284 |
| <i>Of the first sin in particular</i> | 297 |
| <i>Of our fall in Adam</i> | 304 |
| <i>Of the sinfulness of man's natural state</i> | 310 |
| <i>Of the misery of man's natural state</i> | 325 |
| <i>Of election to everlasting life</i> | 334 |
| <i>Of the covenant of grace</i> | 348 |
| <i>Of Christ the only Redeemer of God's elect</i> | 418 |
| <i>Of Christ's incarnation</i> | 435 |
| <i>Of Christ's offices in general</i> | 450 |
| <i>Of Christ's prophetic office</i> | 459 |

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AN
ILLUSTRATION
OF THE
DOCTRINES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.



OF MAN'S CHIEF END AND HAPPINESS.

1 COR. X. 31.—*Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

PSALM lxxxiii. 24, 25.—*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

KNOWLEDGE is a necessary foundation of faith and holiness; and where ignorance reigns in the mind, there is confusion in the heart and life. We have the word of truth in our hands, and many methodical systems of divine truths, amongst which the Shorter Catechism, composed by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster, in pursuance of the solemn league and covenant, as a part of the then intended uniformity between the three nations, is deservedly reckoned the chief. This I shall endeavour to explain with all possible brevity and perspicuity, that ye may have a view of those divine truths, with the reasons of them. And this I have thought it the more necessary to do, in order that your minds may be established in the truth, as our time is like to be a time of trial, wherein ye may be exposed to many snares, and so be in danger of apostasy.

In the first of the texts which I have read, ye have,

1. The chief end of human actions, the glory of God: that is the scope of which all we think, or speak, or do,

should tend; this is the point or common centre, in which all should meet.

2. The extent of it. It is not only some of our actions, but all of them, of what kind soever, that must be directed to this end. This, then, is man's chief duty.

In the second text we have,

1. The Psalmist's chief desire, and what he points at as his only true happiness; that is, the enjoyment of God. He takes God for and instead of all, that in him alone his soul may rest.

2. The reason of this is taken from, (1.) The creature's emptiness, both in body and spirit, ver. 25. (2.) From God's fulness and sufficiency: and this is amplified by the eternity of it, *my portion for ever*.

From both texts the following doctrine natively follows. Doctr. "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever."

In handling this doctrine, I shall speak, I. to the glorifying of God, which is one part of man's chief end.

II. To the enjoyment of God for ever, wherein man's chief happiness consists, and which he is to seek as his chief good.

I. I shall speak to the glorifying of God, which is one part of man's chief end. And here I shall shew,

1. The nature of glorifying God.

2. In what respects God's glory is man's chief end.

3. The extent of this glorifying God.

4. The reason of it.

First, I shall shew the nature of glorifying God. To glorify, is either to make glorious, or to declare to be glorious. God glorifies, *i. e.* makes angels or men glorious; but man cannot make God glorious, for he is not capable of any additional glory, being in himself infinitely glorious, Job xxxv. 7. Hence it is plain, that God gets no advantage to himself by the best works of men, the profit of our holiness redounding entirely to ourselves, Acts xvii. 25. Psal. xvi. 2.

God is glorified, then, only declaratively; he is glorified when his glory is declared. This is done two ways. Objectively, by the creatures inanimate and irrational. Thus the heavens declare the glory of God, Psal. xix. 1. This the creatures do, while they afford matter of praise to God, as a violin is fit to make music, though there must

be a hand to play on it ere it can sound. Man declares his glory also actively. And this he ought to do,

1. By his heart, 1 Cor. vi. 20. *Glorify God in your spirit.* Honouring God with the lips, not with the heart, is but a very lame and unacceptable performance. He ought to be glorified by our understanding, taking him up in the glory which the scripture reveals him in, thinking highly of him, and esteeming him above all other persons or things, Psal. lxxiii. 25. So they that know him not, can never glorify him: and they that esteem any person or thing more than, or as much as him, dishonour him. We glorify him by our wills, chusing him as our portion and chief good, as he really is in himself; by our affections loving him, and rejoicing and delighting in him above all other.

2. By his lips, Psal. l. 23. 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' Therefore man's tongue is called his glory, Psal. xvi. 9. not only because it serves him for speech, which exalts him above the brutes, but because it is given him as a proper instrument for speaking forth the glory of God. So that it must needs be a strange perverting of the tongue, to set it against the heavens, and let it loose to the dishonour of God, and fetter it as to his glory.

3. By his life, Mat. v. 16. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' A holy life is a life of light; it is a shining light, to let a blind world see the glory of God. Sin darkens the glory of God, draws a veil over it. David's sin made the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The study of holiness says, God is holy; mourning for every slip says, God is spotless; walking holily in all manner of conversation, within and without, &c. says, God is omniscient and omnipresent, &c. As when men find a well-ordered family, that tells what a man the master of it is.

SECONDLY, I proceed to shew in what respects God's glory is man's chief end.

First, It is man's end,

1. It is the end which God aimed at when he made man, Prov. xvi. 4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself,' Rom. xi. 36. 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' Every rational agent pro-

poses to himself an end in working, and the most perfect the highest end. Now God is the most perfect Being, and his glory the noblest end. God is not actively glorified by all men, and therefore he surely did not design it; but he designed to have glory from them, either by them or on them; and so it will be. Happy they who glorify him by their actings, that they may not glorify him by their eternal sufferings.

2. It is the end of man as God's work. Man was made fit for glorifying God, Eccl. vii. 29. 'God made man up-right;' as a well-tuned instrument, or as a house conveniently built, though never inhabited. The very fabric of a man's body, whereby he looks upward, while the beasts look down, is a palpable evidence of this.

3. It is that which man should aim at, the mark to which he should direct all he does, 1 Cor. x. 31. the text. This is what we should continually have in our eye, the grand design we should be carrying on in the world, Psal. xvi. 8. 'I have set the Lord always before me,' says David.

Secondly, It is man's chief end, that which God chiefly aimed at, the chief end of man as God's work, and that which man should chiefly aim at. God made man for other ends, as to govern, use, and dispose of other creatures in the earth, sea, and air, wisely, soberly, and mercifully, Gen. i. 26. Man was fitted for these ends, and a man may propose them lawfully to himself, seeing God has set them before him; but still these are but subordinate ends to his glory.

There are some ends which men propose to themselves, which are simply unlawful, as to satisfy their revenge, their lust, their covetousness, &c. These are not capable of subordination to the glory of God, who hates robbery for burnt-offering. But there are other ends, which are indeed in themselves lawful, yet become sinful, if they be not set in their due place, that is, subordinate to the glory of God. Now, God's glory is made our chief end, when these three things concur.

1. When whatever end we have in our actions, the glory of God is still one of our ends in acting. We may eat and drink for the nourishment of our bodies; but this must not jumble out our respect to the glory of God.

If the nourishment of our bodies be the only end of our eating and drinking, it is sinful, and out of the due order.

2. It must not only be our end, but it must be our main and principal end, that which we chiefly design. When God's glory is our chief end, all other ends that we propose to ourselves will be downweighed by this; all other sheafs must bow to that sheaf: as a diligent servant designs to please both the master and his steward, but chiefly the master. But when, on the contrary, a man eats and drinks (for instance) more for the nourishment of his body than for God's glory, it is plain, that God's glory is not the chief end of the man in that action. Hence we read, 2 Tim. iii. 4. of some that are 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.'

3. When it is the ultimate end, the last end, the top and perfection of what we design, beyond which we have no more view, and to which all other ends are made subservient, and as means to that end. Thus we should eat that our bodies may be refreshed; we should desire that our bodies may be refreshed, that we may be the more capable to serve and glorify God in our stations. Thus we are obliged to seek our own salvation, that God may be glorified; and not to seek God's glory only that we may be saved; for that it to make the glory of God a stepping-stone to our own safety.

Thirdly, I come now to shew the extent of this duty. Respect to the glory of God is as salt that must be served up with every dish. The great work of our life is to glorify him; it is the end of our first and of our second creation, Isa. xliii. 21. 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.' We must be for God, Hos. iii. 3. and live to him. This must be the end.

1. Of our natural actions, 1 Cor. x. 31. eating, sleeping, walking, &c. we are under a law as to these things. We may not eat and drink as we please, more than pray as we please, Zech. vii. 6. All these things must be done in subserviency to the glory of God. These things must be done that we may live, and living may glorify God; and when we can do it without them in heaven, then none of these things shall be done.

2. Of our civil actions, working our work, buying and selling, &c. Eph. vi. 7. Prov. xxi. 4. It was one of the sins of the old world, that they were eating; the word is properly used of beasts eating their food: they had no higher end in it than beasts; and marrying, a thing in itself lawful, but they had no eye to God in it.

3. Of our moral and religious actions, Zech. vii. 5. We must pray, hear, &c. for God's glory.

This is such a necessary ingredient in our actions, that none of them are truly good and acceptable to God without it, Zech. vii. 5. Do what we will, it cannot be service to God, if we do not make him our end; no more than a servant's working to himself is service to his master. God will never be the rewarder of a work, whereof he is not the end; for if a man should build houses to all the country, if he build not one to me, I owe him nothing. Alas! to what purpose serves a generation of good works all killed by a depraved end?

Though it is a duty frequently to have a formal and express intention of the glory of God in our actings, yet to have it in every action is impossible: neither are we bound to it; for then, for that very intention we should be obliged to have another, another for that, and another for that, *in infinitum*. But we should always habitually and interpretatively design the glory of God. And that is done when, (1.) The course of our lives is directed to the glory of God, Psal. l. ult. (2.) When we walk according to the rule of God's word, taking heed that we swerve not in any thing from it. And, (3.) When God's will is the reason as well as the rule of our actions; when we believe a truth, because God has said it; and do a duty, because God has commanded it. If we do not so, God loses his glory, and we lose our labour.

Fourthly, The reason of the point is, because he is the first principle, therefore he must be the last end. He is the first and the last, the Alpha, and therefore the Omega. God is the fountain of our being; and therefore seeing we *are* of him, we should be *to* him, Rom. xi. ult. forecited. Man is a mere relative being; God is our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. Our being is but a borrowed being from him, as the rays or beams of the sun are borrowed from the sun: therefore I AM is

God's name. Whatever perfection we have is from him; hence he is called 'the only wise, none good but one, that is God:' he gives us the continuance of all these things, and it is on his cost that we live. As when the waters come from the sea unto the earth, and go back again unto it by brooks and rivers; so all we receive and enjoy comes from God, and ought to go back again to him, by being used for his glory. Wherefore to make ourselves our chief end, is to make ourselves a god to ourselves; for a creature to be a centre to itself, and that God should be a means to that end, is to blaspheme, John viii. 50.

II. I shall speak to the enjoyment of God for ever, wherein man's chief happiness consists, and which he is to seek as his chief good. Here I shall shew,

1. The nature of this enjoyment.
2. The order of it.
3. That it is man's chief end in point of happiness.

FIRST, I shall shew the nature of this enjoyment. There is a twofold enjoyment of God, imperfect and perfect.

First, There is an imperfect enjoyment of God in this life; which consists in two things.

1. In union with him, or a special saving interest in him, whereby God is their God by covenant. By this union Christ and believers are so joined, that they are one spirit, one mystical body. The whole man, soul and body, is united to him, and, through the Mediator, unto God. This is the foundation of all saving enjoyment of God.

2. In communion with God, which is a participation of the benefits of that saving relation, whereof the soul makes returns to the Lord in the exercise of its graces, particularly of faith and love. This is had in the duties of religion, prayer, meditation, &c. in which the Lord privileges his people with manifestations of his grace, favour, and love, bestows on them the influences of his Spirit, gives them many tokens of his kindness, and fills them with joy and peace in believing.

Secondly, There is a perfect enjoyment of God in heaven, when this world is no more. This consists in,

1. An intimate presence with him in glory, Psal. xvi.
11. 'In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand

‘there are pleasures for evermore.’ God himself shall be with them, and they shall ever be with the Lord, enjoying his glorious presence, brought near to his throne, and standing before him, where he shews his inconceivable glory.

2. In seeing him as he is, 1. John iii. 2. They shall have a full, a satisfying, and never-ending sight of God, and of all his glorious perfections and excellencies, and they shall be ravished with the view thereof for ever.

3. In a perfect union with him, Rev. xxi. 3. He will be their God, They were united to God in Christ here by the Spirit and faith, and made partakers of a divine nature, but then only in part; but in heaven they shall perfectly partake of it. There shall be a most close and intimate union between God and them: God shall be in them, and they in God, in the way of a glorious and most perfect union, never to be dissolved.

4. In an immediate, full, free, and comfortable communion with him, infinitely superior to all the communion they ever had with him in this world, and which no mortal can suitably describe.

5. *Lastly*, In full joy and satisfaction resulting from these things for ever, Mat. xxv. 21. The presence and enjoyment of God and the Lamb, shall satisfy them with pleasures for evermore. They shall swim for ever in an ocean of joy, and every object they see shall fill them with the most ecstatic joy, which shall be ever-fresh and new to them, through all the ages of eternity*.

Secondly, Let us consider the order of this enjoyment.

1. It is a part of man's chief end, and, in conjunction with glorifying of God, makes it up. And these two are put together, because no man can glorify God, but he that takes God for his chief good and supreme happiness.

2. Glorifying of God is put before the enjoying of him, because the way of duty is the way to the enjoyment of God. Holiness on earth must necessarily go before felicity in heaven, Heb. xii. 14. There is an inseparable connexion betwixt the two, as between the end and the means; so that no person who does not glorify God here, shall ever enjoy him hereafter. The connexion is insti-

* The reader may see a more full account of the happiness of the saints in heaven, in the author's book, *Fourfold State*, state 4, head 5.

Of Man's Chief End.

tuted by God himself, so that the one can never be attained without the other. Let no person, then, who has no regard for the glory and honour of God in this world, dream that he shall be crowned with glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, in the heavenly mansions. No; the pure in heart, and they who glorify God now, shall alone see God, to their infinite joy in heaven.

THIRDLY, I shall shew, that the enjoyment of God is man's chief end in point of happiness, the thing that he should chiefly seek. For this end,

1. Consider what man is. He is, (1.) A creature that desires happiness, and cannot but desire it. The desire of happiness is woven into his nature, and cannot be eradicated. It is as natural for him to desire it as it is to breathe, (2.) He is not self-sufficient: he is conscious to himself that he wants many things, and therefore he is ever seeking something without himself in order to be happy. (3.) Nothing but an infinite good can fully satisfy the desires of an immortal soul: because, whatever good he finds in the creature, he can still desire more, and will continue to desire it; and where it is not to be found, there his happiness is marred. So that man's happiness is neither to be found in himself nor in any creature, or created good.

2. Consider what God is,

1st, God is the chief good. Some persons, as angels, &c. and some things, as grace, glory, &c. are good; but God is the chief good, for he is the fountain good, and the water that is good, is always best in the fountain. All other goodness is but second-hand goodness, derived and dependant; but God is original, underived, and independent goodness, the cause and source of whatever is good in heaven and earth. Now, where the more goodness is, there the more it is to be sought. And therefore, seeing God is the chief good, the enjoyment of him is the chief end which man should aim at in seeking.

2^{dly} God is all good. (1.) There is nothing in him but what is good; he is entirely without imperfection. (2.) All that is good is in him; so that the soul, finding him commensurate to its desires, needs nothing besides him; and therefore should not, and cannot, fully rest in any person or thing but God, who alone is able to satisfy

all its desires, and afford it that happiness which it earnestly pants after.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. O how does reigning sin pervert the spirit of man, turning it quite away from its chief end! How many are there who make themselves their chief end! They are conjured within the circle of self, and out of it they cannot move. Like beasts, they grovel on the ground, seeking themselves, and acting for themselves only or chiefly, pursuing the enjoyment of earthly things; but look not to God, Phil. iii. 19. Their own advantage is the chief motive and aim they have in their natural, civil, and religious actions, either their own pleasure, profit, or honour and glory. And they never think of, never propose the glory and honour of the infinite Majesty of heaven in any thing they do.

2. This may fill the best with shame and blushing. O how much is God dishonoured by our hearts, lips, and lives! O what self-seeking mixes itself with our best actions! How eagerly do we pursue created things, and how faintly the enjoyment of God! How absurd is such conduct! and how dishonourable to a holy God! It is a saying upon the matter, that God is not the chief good, that he is not a suitable portion for the soul, and that the creature is better than God. How should we be ashamed of ourselves on this account, and labour earnestly to make God the chief and ultimate end of all our actions, and the enjoyment of him our chief happiness!

3. Behold the excellency of man above other creatures on earth! He is made for a noble end, to glorify and enjoy God, while other creatures were made for him. How sad is it, that men should thus forget their dignity, and turn slaves to those creatures which were made to serve them! And how deplorable and lamentable is it, that men, in place of making God their ultimate end, and placing their chief happiness in him, should make their belly, their lusts and idols, their God, and place their chief felicity in the gratification of sensual and brutish pleasures; as the drunkard does in his bottle, the unclean person in his whore, the miser in his wealth, and the ambitious man in titles of honour. Alas! our hearts by nature are set on the earth that we tread upon, and

our desires reach up to those things which we should make stepping-stones of. Let us earnestly implore divine grace, to cure this disorder of our hearts, and give them a bias to more excellent things, and the enjoyment of that which will survive the grave, and not perish with the wrecks of time, and the dissolution of the world.

4. The soul of man is immortal, seeing to enjoy God for ever is its ultimate and supreme happiness. God is immortal, and so must the soul be too, which can never be satisfied but in this never-dying being. The body too must rise again, seeing, God is the God and portion of the whole man. Now, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Can that thinking and immaterial substance which eagerly desires happiness, and can find it nowhere but in the immortal God, perish with the body, and all its thoughts and desires be extinguished in the grave? No; its chief happiness will subsist for ever, and so will the soul too. And both soul and body, which were united to God here, shall continue to be united to him for ever, after the resurrection. Let us then seek to be united to God here, that we may be happy with and in him for ever.

5. When God and the creature come in competition, we must renounce the creature, and cleave to God only, Luke xiv. 33. God is the chief good, and to glorify and adhere to him at all times, and in all cases, and amidst all trials, is our great duty, a duty absolutely required of us. If we are reduced to that dilemma, that we must either give up with the creature, or any worldly goods or possessions, or even life itself, or give up with and deny God and his cause, we must give up with and abandon the former, and not prefer them to the glory of God, which we ought always to study as our main end, and account our chief happiness and joy.

6. Here is a rule to try doctrines by, and also practices. Whatever doctrine tends to glorify God, and promote his honour in the world, is certainly from God, and is to be embraced. And whatever practices have that same tendency, they are good, and deserve to be imitated. Whereas any doctrine that tends to dishonour God, to rob him of his glory, and set the crown upon the creature's head, to depreciate the free grace of God, exalt the

power of nature and of free-will, in opposition to the efficacious and irresistible grace of God, as the doctrines of the Pelagians, Papists, Arminians, and others do, is not from God. Neither is any doctrine or opinion that robs the Son of God of his essential dignity, supremacy, independency, and equality with the Father, to be received, because it is not of God, who will have all men to honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

Lastly, Let this then be your main and chief work, to glorify God, and to seek to enjoy him. And hence see the absolute need of Christ, and faith in him; for there is no glorifying of the Father without the Son, 1 John ii. 23. and no enjoying of God, but through him. No sacrifice is or can be accepted, unless offered upon this altar; and there is no coming into the chamber of presence, but as introduced by Christ.

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 TIM. iii. 16.—*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

THE next head which falls to be touched is the holy scripture, the rule which God has given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. We are poor blind creatures, that know not our way, neither how we should glorify God, nor how we may come to the enjoyment of him. Therefore God hath given us the revelation of his mind in that great point. The connexion betwixt this and the preceding question is abundantly obvious; the one points out the end for which we were made, the other the rule to direct us how to attain to that end. And in this text we have two things.

1. The divine authority of the scriptures asserted. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God.* The word *scripture* signifies *writing* in general; but here it is appropriated to the holy scripture. It principally here aims at the scriptures of the Old Testament, which were written by men of a prophetic spirit: but seeing the New Testament was written by such as were endowed with

the same Spirit for writing, upon that reason, what is applied to the Old belongs also to the New Testament. It is said to be of divine inspiration, because the writers were inspired by the Spirit, who guided their hearts and pens; he dictated, and they wrote; so that it is his word and not theirs; and that is extended to the whole scriptures.

2. The use and end of the scriptures: It is *profitable for doctrine*, &c. If ye desire to know the truths of religion, or what we believe, the scripture is *profitable for doctrine*, teaching us what we are to believe concerning God, Christ, and ourselves, and the great things that concern salvation. If ye want to refute the contrary errors, it is *profitable for reproof*, to convince us of the nature and importance of divine truth and point out what errors we are to avoid. If ye desire to amend your life and practice, casting off sinful practices, it is *profitable for correction*, that is, for reformation of manners. If ye want to know what is duty, and what is sin, it is necessary *for instruction and righteousness*; shewing us how to lead a holy and righteous life before God, and instructing us in the true righteousness, which is the foundation of our access to God, and acceptance with him, the righteousness of Christ. And what more is necessary for salvation, for faith and obedience, for the whole of salvation?

Two doctrines offer themselves from the words, viz.

DOCT. I. 'The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.'

DOCT. II. 'The scriptures are the rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God.'

I shall prosecute each doctrine in order.

DOCT. I. The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.'

Here I shall shew,

I. What is meant by the Old and New Testament.

II. What are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

III. The necessity of the scriptures.

IV. That the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.

V. Deduce some inferences.

I shall shew what is meant by the Old and New Testament. It is the covenant of grace which is called *a testament*, and it is properly a testamentary covenant, without any proper conditions as to us, Heb. viii. 10. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts : and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Christ is the testator ; he made the testament, and confirmed it with his death. The spirit of Christ drew the testament, dictating it to the holy penmen. This testament of Christ's is one and the same as to substance, though sometimes more clearly revealed than at other times. The Old Testament is the more obscure draught of Christ's will, and the New Testament is the more clear one. Thus they only differ in circumstances, while the substantials of both are one and the same ; one Mediator and testator, one legacy or promise of remission of sin and eternal life, and one faith as the way of obtaining it*.

II. I proceed to shew what are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. The scriptures of the Old Testament are those which begin with Genesis, and end with Malachi ; and the scriptures of the New Testament are those which begin with Matthew, and end with the Revelation. And it is worthy of our special remark, how the Old Testament and the New, like the cherubims in the most holy place, stretch forth their wings touching one another ; the Old Testament ending with the prophecy of sending Christ and John the Baptist, Mal. iv. and the New beginning with the history of the coming of these two.

The books of the Old Testament were divided by the Hebrews into three, the law, the Propiets, and Ketubim, written books. The law contains the five books of Moses. The Prophets are twofold, former and latter. The former are the historical books of the Old Testament, as Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings ; and they were so called, because they told things already done. The latter related things before they were done ; and are of two sorts ; the greater, which are three, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel ; the lesser twelve, viz. Hosea, Joel, &c.

* See more on this subject in the author's *View of the Covenant of Grace*, head 4. title, *Christ the Testator of the Covenant*.

The written books were called so, because they were written by such as had the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the Hebrews speak, but not of prophecy. And of that sort are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel. The Hebrews ascribe this division of them to Ezra; and it seems our Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged the same, while he tells his disciples, Luke xxiv. 44. of the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

The books of the New Testament are divided into three sorts, Histories, the Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation, which is prophetic.

The books of both the Testaments were written by different authors. As to the Old Testament, Moses wrote the Pentateuch; only some verses in the End of Deuteronomy, where Moses' death is recorded, could not be written by him, but are said to have been written by Joshua; who also wrote the book that bears his name; or, according to the opinion of some, it was written by Eleazar, Aaron's son. Samuel is supposed to have written the book of Judges, and, it would appear, the last part of the book of Joshua, containing the account of the death of Joshua and Eleazar: Some think that the Judges did write every one the history of their own time; and that Samuel at last did put them all into one volume. The book of Ruth also was written by him, as the Hebrews tell. He wrote also the first book bearing his name, to the 25th chapter, where his death is narrated. The rest of the chapters of that book, and the whole of the second book, are said to have been written by David. The books of the Kings are supposed to be written by David and Solomon, and other prophets that lived in these times; so that each of them did write what was done in his own time. Job is supposed to have written the book that bears his name. David wrote the Psalms, but not all: such as are not his have the author's name prefixed; as Asaph, Heman, &c.: and they were all by Ezra collected into one volume. Ezra is said to have written the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah; Mordecai, that of Esther; and Solomon, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the

other prophets, wrote every one their own prophecies, containing a short sum of their sermons.

As for the books of the New Testament, without controversy the evangelists wrote the Gospels, according as their names are prefixed to them. Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles; and the remaining books, the Epistles and the Revelation, were written by those whose names they bear. Only, as to the Epistle to the Hebrews, there has been some doubt, some ascribing it to Luke, some to Barnabas, others to Apollos, and others to Clemens: but many learned men have given good reasons to prove it to be written by the apostle Paul.

But the principal author is the Holy Spirit, whence the scripture is called the Word of God. The penmen were but the instruments in the hand of God in writing the same. It was the Spirit that dictated them, that inspired the writers, and guided them. But the inspiration was not the same in all points to all the penmen; for some things were before utterly unknown to the writer, as the history of the creation of the world to Moses; the prediction of future events in respect of the prophets; which therefore the spirit did immediately reveal to them: Other things were known to the writers before, as the history of Christ to the four evangelists, &c.; in respect of these there needed no new revelation, but a divine irradiation of the mind of the writer, giving him a divine certainty of those things which he wrote. By this inspiration all of them were infallibly guided, so as they were put beyond all possibility of erring. And this inspiration was extended not only to the things themselves expressed, but to the words wherein they were expressed, though agreeable to the natural style and manner of each writer, 2 Pet. i. 21. Psal. xlv. 1. Upon this account the scripture is attributed to the Holy Spirit, without making any mention of the penmen, Heb. x. 15.

Quest. But what opinion are we to form of the books called *Apocrypha*, And why are they so called?

Ans. These books, which are found placed in some Bibles betwixt Malachi and Matthew are called *Apocrypha*, which is a Greek word, signifying *hidden* or *absconded*. The reasons of this name are given thus (1) Because they were not acknowledged by the church to be

of divine inspiration. (2.) Because the names of the authors were hid. (3.) Because they contain some things unknown to Moses, the prophets and apostles. (4.) Because, for the foresaid reasons, they were judged unworthy to be publicly read in the church. Concerning these books, we believe that they are not of divine inspiration, and therefore no part of the canon of scripture; that is, they are not to be admitted as any part of the rule of faith and manners: and therefore they are of no authority in the church of God for the determining of controversies in religion; and so, though they may be of use as other human writings, yet they are no otherwise to be made use of nor approved. The reasons are,

1. They were not acknowledged by the church of the Jews for canonical: to whom the Apostle tells us, Rom. iii. 2. 'the oracles of God,' under the Old Testament dispensation 'were committed.' They even forbade their children to read them till they came to mature age.

2. They were not written in the Hebrew tongue, but in the Greek; and the authors of them were posterior to Malachi, who was the last of the prophets, according to the saying of the Hebrews, that the Holy Ghost went up from Israel after the death of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. And 1 Mac. iv. 46. plainly shews, that there was no prophet among them, to shew them what they should do with the stones of the polluted altar. And it may clearly appear to any unbiassed person, how the interposing of these books betwixt Malachi and Matthew does cut off the beautiful connexion betwixt the end of the Old and the beginning of the New Testament, and how Malachi's prophecy is designed of God to close up the scriptures of the Old Testament, in that he prophecies most distinctly of the coming of Christ, and John the Baptist his forerunner, with the accomplishment of which Matthew begins his gospel, as I observed before.

3. The primitive church for the first four centuries received not these books; and when they came to be read, the reader stood but in an inferior place, they being then read as profitable books, though not of divine authority.

4. They are no where cited by Christ and his apostles. Yea, they are not obscurely rejected by him, while he divides the scriptures into Moses, the Prophets, and the

Psalms, Luke xxiv. 44. And whereas the Apostle tells us, that 'prophecy came not of old by the will of man, but *that* holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. i. 21. the authors of these books pretend to no such thing. The author of Ecclesiasticus in the prologue intreats the reader to pardon them, (*viz.* him and his grandfather), wherein they may seem to come short of some words which they have laboured to interpret. Such an apology is there, 2 Mac. xv. 38. 'If I have done well, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.' 2 Mac. ii. 23. the author tells us, he will essay to abridge in one volume the five books of Jason of Cyrene. Ver. 26. he tells how he hath taken on him the painful labour of abridging; that it was a matter of sweat and watching to him: And ver. 27. 'But for the pleasuring of many,' says he, 'we will undertake this great pains.' And more of this stuff has he there; which plainly speaks forth nothing else than human learning and pains, which men desire to have much accounted of amongst others.

Lastly, They neither agree with themselves nor the holy scriptures, as may plainly appear to those who will consider them diligently. 1 Mac. vi. 16. compared with ver. 4. it is said, that Antiochus died at Babylon. Yet 2 Mac. i. 13. 14, 15, 16. it is said, that when he was come into Persia, he was slain in the temple of Nanea, whom he pretended that he would marry, and would receive money in name of dowry, by her priests. Yea, 2 Mac. ix. 28. he is said to have died in a strange country in the mountains. The book of Tobit is stuffed with absurd stories; it makes the angel Raphael to tell a lie, and to teach Tobit's son a devilish art, to drive away the devil with the heart and liver of a fish; and when the evil spirit smelled the smell, he fled into the utmost parts of Egypt, &c. The author of the history of the Maccabees commends Rasis for self-murder, and prayer for the dead, 2 Mac. xii. 44, 45. These things plainly shew, that these books are not from the Spirit of God.

All this shews the darkness of Popery that receives these books as canonical, and the dregs remaining in the church of England, who, though they do not receive them for canonical, yet mix the reading of portions of them in their churches with the scriptures, while in the mean time, several portions of the holy scripture are passed over, and not

read publicly in their service. And whilst we blame the church of England for reading in her service books that are not canonical, impartiality obliges us to say, that far too small a portion of the books that are canonical is read in the public service of our own church. This is equally culpable.

And as there is none of these to be admitted into the canon, so neither can we gratify the Papists with yielding, that there are any books of the scripture lost, lest we reflect on the providence of God, that to a miracle has preserved these books to this day, and has insured the preservation of far less parts than whole books, Mat. v. 18.

III. I proceed to shew the necessity of the scriptures.

1. There was a necessity of the revelation of the doctrine of the scriptures. For though the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable, Rom. i. 20. and ii. 14, 15. yet they are not sufficient to shew us either how we should glorify, or how we may enjoy God, and so are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, that is necessary to salvation. For (1.) There is no salvation out of Christ, Acts iv. 12. 1 Cor. iii. 11. there is no salvation through him but by faith, Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 16. and xvii. 3. and there can be no faith nor knowledge of Christ but by revelation, Rom. x. 14,—17. (2.) They who have only nature's light, and so do not enjoy divine revelation, are without God, and have no hope, Eph. ii. 12.; and therefore there was a necessity for preaching the gospel, 1 Cor. i, 21. (3.) Whatever knowledge men may attain to of God by nature, yet saving illumination and conversion can only be got by the revealed will of God written in his word. See Psal. xix. throughout.

2. There is a necessity of the scriptures, or written word, though the Papists whose kingdom is supported by darkness, deny it. It is true, God did teach his church a long time before Moses without the written word; but then the same doctrine that we have in the scriptures, the patriarchs had by extraordinary revelation often repeated; and their long lives gave them opportunity to keep what was so revealed uncorrupted, and so to hand it down to others. But now both these are gone, and therefore the written

word is necessary, (1.) For preserving the doctrine from corruption in such times of apostasy, 2 Pet. iii. 1. (2). For the better propagating of the truth, Matt. xxviii. 19. The apostles could not with their voice teach all nations, but by their writings they could. (3.) If the written word were wanting, the church has nothing to look to but uncertain traditions; but the written word is a sure touchstone of doctrines, Isa. viii. 20. a light in a dark place, 2 Pet. i. 19. both of which are most necessary.

3. There is a necessity of it not only for beginners, but for those who are more perfect. The scripture is written for all indifferently, Col. iii. 16. Even the most perfect will find enough there, and more than they are able for: 'Open thou mine eyes,' says David, 'that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,' Psal. cxix. 18. It is but the blindness of enthusiasts to pretend, that it is only for the weaker, and that the more perfect must follow the Spirit: for if that Spirit teach any thing contrary to the written word, it is a spirit of darkness, Isa. viii. 20.; yea, if it teach another doctrine, an anathema is pronounced against it, Gal. i. 8.

Thus it plainly appears, that nothing short of scripture-revelation is sufficient to salvation, and that in an objective way; that is, that it is a sufficient rule to lead men to salvation. But something else is requisite to make this rule effectual for that end. No skill or wisdom of men representing them in the clearest point of view, nor all the power of the most elaborate and persuasive reasonings, can produce this effect. This work is the province of the Spirit of God, which he accomplishes by an internal illumination of the mind, giving blinded sinners a saving discovery of divine truths; by powerfully subduing man's obstinate will, and enabling it cheerfully and readily to obey the will of God and the authority of Christ; and by working upon our affections, exciting in us ardent desires after God and Christ, and a high esteem of divine truth, and removing the prejudices in our minds against it, and opening our hearts to receive the word, and comply with the design thereof.

IV. I shall next shew that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God. Christ is God's personal word, but the scriptures are his written word, Heb. i. 2.

The scriptures appear to be the word of God, if we consider,

1. The antiquity of some parts of them, which are more ancient than any human writings, and give us such an history as none but God himself could do, viz. the creation of the world; for how could men tell what was done before man had a being?

2. The preservation of it to this day, notwithstanding the malice of devils and wicked men against it. If it had not been of God, it could not have continued till now, considering the attempts that have been made to destroy it.

3. The candour and sincerity of the penmen of these sacred writings, who honestly declare what they delivered was received from God, plainly tell their own faults as well as those of others, and every way write as men over-ruled by the Spirit of God.

4. The exact performance of scripture-prophecies. Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus should deliver the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, not only before that captivity took place, but more than an hundred years before that prince was born. Jeremiah, a little before that captivity, foretold it should last seventy years, and that was the precise duration of it. How remarkably have all the prophecies relating to the fall of the Babylonish, Persian, Grecian, and Roman monarchies been fulfilled! And what an exact accomplishment has there been of the several prophecies relating to the birth and death of Christ, and the spreading of his kingdom in the world! The scripture contains many other prophecies which time has shewn exactly performed, and many that are yet to be fulfilled.

5. The blood of many martyrs hath confirmed the divinity of this book, while they joyfully laid down their lives for the truth of it; in which it is evident they were carried up above what human power could do.

6. The scriptures have been confirmed by incontrovertible miracles. All miracles are wrought by God himself; and it is inconsistent with his holy nature to work miracles for confirming of a lie or a cheat. Many miracles were wrought by Moses, by Christ, and by his apostles. If then these miracles were done by them, the doctrine they taught was true. Now, we have all rational grounds to suppose, that these miracles were really wrought. It is certain, that the general

consent of those who have heard of them goes that way. Now, if it be supposed a cheat that such things were done, then that cheat took place either among those who were said to have seen them, and were witnesses to them or else among those who lived after that generation which is said to have seen them was dead and gone. But neither of these two can be said here. Not the first, for two reasons. (1.) Because these miracles were such things as mens outward senses (their eyes and ears) could be judges of. (2.) They are said to be done, not in a corner, but in the face of the world. Therefore it was impossible that that generation could be imposed upon. If a man should say, that yesterday he divided the river Tweed in presence of us all, and brought us all through on dry land, it would be impossible for him to make us believe it, for we saw no such thing, nor waded so through that river. Or if he should say, that he came to the church-yard, and raised a dead man in our presence, whom we now see among us, he could never cause us believe it, nor cheat us into a persuasion of the same. Neither could any in after generations invent such a story, and impose the cheat upon others. (1). Because there are some things done in memory of these miracles. (2). Such observances did commence from the time that such things were done, as circumcision, the passover, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. If then the forger would impose it on others, he must make them believe, that these observances have been constantly in use since that time, which, if they were not, could not be believed, because it contradicts the senses: for it would be impossible to make a nation believe that they were all circumcised or baptised, when there was no such thing; and especially that such things were done to them in memory of such a thing as they never heard of.

7. The scriptures must either be from God, or the creature. They cannot be from the creature; for if so, they must be from angels or men. Neither of these can be said. Not the first; for then they should either be from good angels or evil angels. From good angels they cannot be, in regard, they say, they are the word of God, and this would be a most gross cheat which cannot be attributed to good angels; for angels imposing such a cheat on the world could no more be looked on as good, but as evil. With what

shadow of reason can it be imagined, that good angels, remaining so, should abuse the name of God, as to speak in his name, what he never said? Evil angels it cannot be either, in regard the scripture doth natively tend to overturn the devil's kingdom; it pronounces their doom, discovers their malicious designs, brings men out of their service, and from doing what is pleasing to them. The same way may we reason concerning good or bad men their being the principal authors of the scriptures. And you know what torment the scripture assigns to liars. It remains then that the scripture is of divine inspiration.

Besides, such things are found in the scripture themselves, as do plainly demonstrate they are the word of God. As,

1. The heavenliness of the matter of the scripture, shews it to be of a divine origin. Therefore they are called *the holy scriptures*; Rom. i. 2. See Psal. xii. 6. Nothing carnal or earthly is delivered therein, but all is what becomes those who live above the world, and shall shine in glory. I take this heavenliness of the matter to respect two things. (1.) The sublime mysteries therein revealed, which nature ever so much elevated could never attain to the discovery of. Such is the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the spiritual union betwixt Christ and believers. The light of nature improved by the learned to the utmost advantage, could not teach these things; yet a few fishermen plainly delivered them. (2.) The most exact holiness of its precepts, commanding all holiness, and forbidding all impurity of heart and life under the pain of damnation; and that so universally, as all the writings of philosophers have come far short of. Here we are taught to love our enemies, to be truly and thoroughly humble and self-denied; and this urged by such arguments as may be most effectual for inciting men to the practice of these duties. Sure this could neither be the work of men, being so opposite to corrupt nature, nor of devils being so opposite to their kingdom and interest, but of that God who is holy, and loveth righteousness.

2. The efficacy of the doctrine, in its convincing and searching the conscience, Heb. iv. 12.; converting the soul from its most beloved lusts, even when nothing can be expected from the world for such a change but the cross,

Psal. xix. 7.; rejoicing the heart under the deepest distresses, ver. 8. This efficacy lies not in the bare words, letters, or syllables, which have no other power than to signify the things; but it is the ordinary means which the Spirit makes use of for these ends, without which it will be but a dead letter.

3. The majesty and sublimity of the style, an elevated and grand diction which runs through many passages of the scriptures, particularly in the books of Moses, some parts of the Psalms, in the book of Job, and the writings of the prophets. There are in several passages of the Old Testament such a loftiness of style, so grand an assemblage of bold images and representations, such a collection of noble and majestic sentiments, and so much magnificence and pomp of language, as cannot be found in any human writings whatever. There is something so truly majestic and sublime, so grand and magnificent in the style of the sacred writings, as has forced heathen philosophers to acknowledge it, and select passages therefrom as instances of the true sublime; as does Longinus with regard to the words of God, *Let there be*, and some other passages. At the same time let it be observed, that there is nothing affected, no flights of false eloquence, no exertions of a luxurient genius, no laboured strokes of a warm imagination, no forced images, no distorted metaphors, no quaint allusions, or unnatural comparisons which are frequently found in the most admired productions of ancient and modern writers; but the utmost plainness and perspicuity, a noble simplicity, and an elegant familiarity, level to the capacity of the illiterate, reign throughout the sacred volume. So that its style must engage the attention and regard of the learned philosopher and poet, and delight the unlearned peasant. Thus God is frequently brought in speaking to and by the prophets, and his majesty set forth in a majestic style, as Is. lvii. 15. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy,' &c. There is no affectation of words there, being below the majesty of the divine law: none are spared, but the scripture speaks as freely and plainly to the great as to the small, to the rich as to the poor.

4. The consent of all the parts of scripture; though written by several hands, and at different times, yet all of

them so agreeing in their precepts, narratives of matters of fact, and designs, that there is no irreconcilable difference to be found amongst them. But here the Socinians call us to consider this point at more length; for they say that there is some repugnancy in the scriptures in some things of little or no moment, and that not a seeming but real repugnancy. But we believe that in nothing does one holy writer differ from another in the scriptures, but that such things as seem to be repugnant do in themselves most exactly agree. This principle I shall endeavour to prove.

(1.) There are no things in the Scriptures of little or no moment; and if so, the writers could not err in them. That there are no such things in it; the scripture plainly teaches, as in the text, *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*, &c. Rom. xv. 4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' The Jews said, that there was not one point in scripture but mountains of mysteries hang on it. See Matth. v. 18. It argues a profane spirit to talk of the scriptures at that rate. The people of God know that many a time they have read over a scripture in which they could see little or nothing, but afterwards they have seen a great deal in it when the Spirit hath been commentator: and though in some things we never see any weighty thing, must we therefore conclude that there is none there?

(2.) The holy penmen were, in all that they wrote, acted and guided by the Spirit of God, or wrote all by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as says the text, and 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. If all scripture was given by inspiration, if no scripture be of private interpretation, nor came by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, how can there be any error in any passage of scripture? If the scriptures be the word of God, they must be altogether pure, Psal. xi. 7.

(3.) Those things in which there is some repugnancy betwixt the penmen of the scriptures, are either a part of the canonical scripture, or not. If they be, then [1.] All scripture is not given by inspiration of God. [2.] The scriptures are holy scriptures, Rom. i. 2; but errors, whether in greater or lesser things, are unholy, and cannot be a part of the holy scriptures. If they be no part of

the holy scriptures, why do they charge the holy scriptures with errors therein?

(4.) If it be so that there is such repugnancy in the scriptures, then they cannot found certain and divine faith; for a fallible testimony can ground only a fallible belief. And how shall we know when they are right, and when they are wrong? One says that he is guided by the Spirit, and tells us such a thing; another says the same, and tells us the contrary: Whom shall we believe? If you say it must be determined by the greater number of the holy penmen, it is well known, that amongst those who are fallible, one may be righter than many. But this is plainly to lean to human testimony; for one speaking by the Spirit is as much to be believed as ten thousand. So that this truly dissolves the authority of the whole scriptures.

In short, we refuse that there are any real inconsistencies or contradictions in the holy oracles of God. Whatever seeming inconsistencies or repugnancies there may be, they may be easily reconciled, and have been actually reconciled to satisfy every sober person, by many learned divines, whose writings may be consulted on this head.

5. This scope of the whole scriptures, which is to give all glory to God. The design of them is to exalt none but the infinite majesty of Heaven, to humble all mankind, and empty them of themselves, that God's grace may be all, and men themselves nothing, but entirely dependent on the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

6. The full discovery it makes of the way of man's salvation. Who could ever have told of the Son of God his dying for the sins of the elect, and have made a discovery of the way of salvation by faith, which the scripture hath plainly set down?

7. The entire perfection of the scripture; that is, the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture.

There are two ways how matters of faith and life are set down in the scriptures. The one is when the thing is set down expressly in so many words; as the unlawfulness of murder, when it is said, 'Thou shalt not kill;' the ordinance of baptism, as in that, 'Go and teach all nations, baptising.

them,' &c. The other is by good and necessary consequence, which is when the thing itself is not found in the scriptures in so many words, but doth evidently (in itself) and necessarily flow from the express words of scripture, as the baptising of infants is by good and necessary consequence drawn from that, 'Go ye, and baptise all nations.'

Here I shall first prove, that, besides what is to be found in express words in the scriptures, good and necessary consequences deduced therefrom are also to be admitted, as truly binding as what is declared in express words there, whether in fundamentals or in such things as are built on the foundation. If one can prove any thing by good and necessary consequence from the scripture, it is all one, as to the binding power on men's consciences, as if it were expressly set down in so many words.

(1.) Good and necessary consequences are such as the word is designed for. What is deduced from them, so is indeed the sense and meaning of the words; and if you have the words without the meaning of them, or without the full meaning of them, in so far ye come short of the true intent of the words. If I bid a man draw near the fire, do I not desire him to warm himself, though I speak not one word of his warming himself? Were not the scriptures written for that end, that 'we through patience and comfort of them might have hope?' Rom. xv. 4. But this cannot be obtained without the use of consequences. Are they not profitable for doctrine,—'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?' 2 Tim. iii. 16. But can this be had without the use of consequences?

(2.) The great fundamental article, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, before the New Testament was written, could not be proved to the Jews by express scripture testimony, but by good and necessary consequence; yet Christ tells them that there could be no salvation for them without the belief of this. 'If ye believe not that I am he (the Messiah),' says he, 'ye shall die in your sins.' John viii. 24.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, while he would prove the fundamental article of the resurrection against the Sadducees, does not seek after a text that said in express words, that the dead shall rise again, but proves it by good consequence, yet no less firmly than if he had produced an ex-

press text for it, Matth. xxii. 32. And it is no less evident that the apostles follow him in this method; as in treating of the resurrection of Christ, Acts. ii. 26. of the resurrection of all mankind, 1 Cor. xv. and of the justification of a sinner before God, in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

(4.) Such as reject all arguing from scripture by consequences, must either confess that by no scripture this way is condemned, or else they must adduce some express scripture text forbidding it. The last they can never do. If they say the first, then it is approved; otherwise the scripture is no perfect rule of faith and practice, which we shall immediately shew to be false. If they say that the scripture leaves it indifferent, then I ask, how dare they condemn it?

(5) Refusing to admit good and necessary consequences from scripture, overturns all religion, both law and gospel, faith and practice. For how shall it be proved, that John or James are obliged to obey the law, and believe the gospel but by consequence? where will they find an express text for these? Only the law speaks to all, the gospel to every hearer of it, and consequently they oblige thee and me. This way, then, of any doctrine its being set down in the scripture being admitted, we are to prove next.

That the scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and manners; or that the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down therein, &c.

1. God hath expressly forbidden to add any thing unto his word; therefore it needs no addition, and so is perfect Deut. iv. 2. 'Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you.' Consider what ye speak of; even of statutes and judgments; statutes, ceremonies, and rites of worship; even to these he will have nothing added. So we have all additions prohibited, Prov. xxx. 6.; and that under a severe penalty, Rev. xxii. 18.

2. 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' as is expressly asserted, Psal. xix. 8. There it is said of it, (1.) it converts the soul; (2.) makes wise the simple; (3.) rejoiceth the heart; and (4.) enlightens the eyes. The apostle plainly asserts the perfection of it, while he tells us, 2. Tim. iii. 15. that *scripture* is able to make a man wise unto salvation.' How can it be so, unless it teach all things necessary to salvation?

It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, &c. What can be desired more? And that ye may be sure there is nothing wanting in it, he tells you, it is given for that purpose, 'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' So Christ saith, 'They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them,' Luke xxvi. 29.; clearly importing, that in them is contained what is sufficient to salvation.

3. Consider the end for which the scriptures were written, even 'that believing men may have life,' John xx. 31.; that 'through patience and comfort of the scriptures they might have hope,' Rom. xv. 4. If any thing necessary to salvation were not in them, how would they answer the end for which they were written?

4. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples all that he had heard of the Father, viz. necessary to their salvation, John xv. 15. He commissions them to teach all others, even to the end of the world, what he commanded them, Matth. xxviii. 20. But this they could not do *viva voce*; therefore they did it in their writings. And whoso considers how exact the apostles were of teaching things of lesser moment, as what day the collection for the poor should be made, &c. cannot think they would neglect any thing necessary to salvation, unless they could not through ignorance or forgetfulness; neither of which can be imputed to them in their writings, being led by the Spirit of God infallibly.

5. The nature of the scriptures teaches us their perfection. For if they be not perfect they cannot be a rule; for a rule must always be commensurable to the thing to be regulated. They are Christ's testament, to which nothing is to be added, being confirmed.

I shall now deduce some inferences from this subject.

1. The holy penmen of the scriptures had a command from God to write, and did not write only occasionally without a command. For that inspiration was an internal command, whereby the Spirit moved them to write, 2. Pet. i. 21.

2. The penmen of the scriptures were infallible in their writing, so that they were not mistaken in any thing, even of the least moment: far less is there any real contradiction among them, being all guided by the same Spirit, who inspired the very words, and kept them from all error, 2 Pet. i. 20, 21.

3. The authority of the scripture in itself, that is, the power it hath to bind the conscience, does not depend on the church, but wholly on God, the author of it. For,

(1.) The church is built upon the scriptures, Eph. ii. 20. 'Upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles.' This foundation is not personal; 'for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ:' but it is doctrinal, the doctrine of the prophets and apostles. Now, it is clear, that the superstructure depends on the foundation, not the foundation on it.

(2.) If the authority of the scriptures depended on the church, then we behoved first of all to believe the authority of the church without the scriptures, and our faith should be built upon human testimony, which is fallible; but we believe the church for the scriptures, and no otherwise, Isa. viii. 20. and human testimony cannot found divine faith.

(3.) Whence can any prove that the church is to be believed but from the scripture? and then to say, that the scriptures must be believed for the church's testimony, is a circle unworthy of men of sense.

(4.) Either the church had reason to receive the scriptures or not. If they had no reason to receive them, they have as little reason to impose them on others. If they had, what was it, but that it was truth, and worthy to be received? Therefore their testimony does not make it truth, or worthy to be believed and obeyed.

(5.) The scripture is God's own word, 2 Tim. iii. 16. How blasphemous is it then to deny faith unto God in the scriptures, while he speaks to us in them, unless the testimony of men give authority to his word? This is as much as to say, that God hath his authority from the church, and that he ought not to be believed or obeyed, unless the church commanded it; which is most blasphemous. Of this blasphemy is the church of Rome guilty, who roundly assert that the authority of the scripture depends on the church. I shall only add, that this is the high way to keep Christians off from convincing of Turks, Pagans, and Jews, as to the New Testament, while we tell them that the authority of the scripture, wherein our religion is laid down, depends on the church, and that the scriptures are true, because the church says it.

4. The authority of the scripture as to us is not from the church, but from itself; that is, the reason why we receive the scripture as the word of God, it is not because the church says it is so, but because it evidences itself to be so. For as God's works do themselves tell their Maker, so his word declares the Speaker; so that a spiritual discerners must needs say on the reading of it, though none should recommend it. It is the voice of God, not of men. Can we discern an unlearned man's letter from that of a learned man? and doth not God's word bear a divine character? It is a light, a lamp, &c. the nature of which is to discover itself. Thus there is objective evidence enough in the scripture; though indeed the subjective evidence cannot be had but by the Spirit of God; so that to him bearing witness by and with the word, we owe the full assurance that it is God's word, 2 Cor. ii. 10, 14. And this is the reason why great scholars may be less persuaded of this truth, than the most unlearned peasants; because, though the sun discovers itself sufficiently, yet blind men cannot see it.

Now, that the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word, I shall prove by the following arguments.

1. The scripture makes this inward illumination of the Spirit of God necessary for understanding of the scriptures, while it ascribes the same wholly unto the Spirit, Matth. xvi. 17. 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it, [Christ's being the Son of the living God] unto thee, but my father which is in heaven;' 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12. 'God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' If the Spirit of God take the same unto himself as his own proper work, how can any arrogate it to themselves, as if by the power of nature they were able for it?

2. There is an utter inability in man by nature to know savingly the things of God. They are above his capacity while he remains in his natural state, and nothing can act

beyond the sphere of its activity. This is plain from 1 Cor. ii. 14. where not only the act of receiving them is denied to natural men, but the very power of discerning them; and the reason is given, 'because they are spiritually discerned,' and he wants the organ of discerning spiritually. And this discerning is appropriated to the spiritual man, ver. 15. Had not the Israelites in the wilderness very great external helps to gain the knowledge of the things of God, Deut. xxix. ? but all was ineffectual. What was the want then ? See ver. 4. 'The Lord hath not given you' (says Moses, to them) 'an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear.'

3. If it were not the spiritual illumination that gave this saving understanding of the things of God, then the greatest adepts in human literature would have most of the saving knowledge of such things as are revealed in the word. This plainly follows : But that it is not so, the scripture testifies, 1 Cor. i. 20, 26, 27, 28. 'Where is the wise ? Where is the scribe ? where is the disputer of this world ? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ? For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise : and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.' Many times it is seen to be quite otherwise. And what makes the difference ? See Matth. xi. 25. 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth (says Christ), because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' Even as he hath put this treasure in earthen vessels, to the end the praise might be of God, that it may be seen it is not the act of the preacher, but the power of the Spirit, that gives true understanding.

4. Men without the saving illumination of the Spirit are so far from attaining sufficient knowledge of the things revealed in the word of God, that they judge them foolish, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The doctrine concerning Christ crucified was to the Jews, who had the law and the prophets, a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks, who excelled in human learning,

foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23.; yea, no less than madness, Acts xxvi. 24. Nay, even the godly themselves, when without the actual influence of the Spirit, are not far from reckoning as they do who are in nature; as in the case of the apostles, looking on the account brought them of the resurrection of their Lord as an idle tale, and not believing it, Acts xxiv. 11. The doctrine of Christ's resurrection seemed to the disciples as *idle tales*; how much more so to men utterly destitute of the Spirit, who many times are besides judicially blinded? 2 Cor. iv. 4.

5. The Lord promises his Spirit to the end men may be taught to know the truths of God savingly, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. John xiv. 16, 17. and xvi. 12, 13. Has he promised his Spirit in vain? or are we sufficiently furnished already? If so, why does he promise his Spirit?

6. The prayers of the saints for this illumination prove the necessity of it, Psal. cxix. 18. Eph. i. 17, 18. Col. i. 9. And they pray so, because they feel the need of it: the experience of the Spirit is that against which there is no disputing.

7. Let us consider that passage, John vi. 45. 'And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' It is plain that by coming unto Christ is meant saving faith in him. Now, in order to this there is a promise, that they shall all, viz. all the elect, for faith is the saving faith of God's elect, be taught of God, viz. by the Spirit, not merely by external revelation, because whosoever thus hears comes unto Christ: but it is certain that all come not to Christ that hear, and learn of the Father by external revelation only. From all, which it is evident, that unto the sufficient understanding of the things revealed in the scripture the teaching of the Spirit is necessary; and that all who attain to the saving knowledge of these things do believe.

What then remains upon this head but, that we diligently read the holy scriptures as being the word of God, and the rule which he hath given to direct us both as to faith and practice; and that we fervently pray to God, that he may give us his holy Spirit to enlighten our minds in the saving knowledge of the word, without which we will remain in the dark, and the word will be but a dead letter to

us? Lord open our eyes, that we may understand thy word.

THE UTILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES AS A RULE.

I proceed to the consideration of another Doctrine.

DOCT. 'The scriptures are the rule to direct us how we
'may glorify and enjoy God.'

Here I shall only give the properties of this rule.

1. It is a perspicuous or clear rule. For though all things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

(1.) With respect to all things necessary to salvation, whether for faith or practice, it cannot be denied, but there are portions of the scripture very obscure, which possibly are not rightly interpreted even to this day; but in such things as are necessary to salvation, they are clear. And in this respect it hath been said, that the scriptures are a depth wherein a lamb may wade, and an elephant may swim.

(2.) Though some things, the faith of which is necessary to salvation, be high and incomprehensible mysteries, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Son of God, &c. yet the way of propounding them is clear.

(3.) It may be that what is truly necessary unto salvation may be very obscurely laid down in some place of scripture; yet in some other place we shall find the same thing clearly propounded:

(4.) And that so as not only the learned, but even the unlearned, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them; which you must carefully remember is meant here of believing persons, who have the inward illumination of the Spirit, removing their own natural darkness: for if ye shall understand it of unbelievers, it contradicts what we have laid down above, relating to the necessity of spiritual

illumination. And so the sense is, that not only may the learned, but even the unlearned Christian, attain to a sufficient understanding of the word ;

(5.) Providing they make due use of the ordinary means appointed of God for the understanding of them ; reading attentively and devoutly, with prayer and meditation on them, &c.

This perspicuity of the scriptures I shall prove by the following arguments.

(1.) The scripture plainly teaches its own perspicuity and clearness in this sense. It is called *a lamp* and *a light*, Psal. cxix. 106. 'The very 'entrance of it (is said) give light and understanding to the simple,' ver. 130. See Prov. vi. 23. The apostle, 2 Pet. i. 19. calls the holy scriptures *a light*, and particularly the word of prophecy, or the prophetic word, which of all the rest seems most dark, yet this he calls a *light* and a shining light, *shining in a dark place* ; shewing thereby, that where it comes and shines, though the place be of itself dark, yet it dispels the darkness.

(2.) Such is the way God hath delivered his word, that its commands are not remote from the understanding ; the meanest believer hath no reason to complain in the difficulty of it in the things necessary to salvation, Deut. xxx. 11. &c. 'For this command which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off : It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it ? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it ? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.'

(3.) If all things necessary to salvation be understood by all sincere Christians, and this by virtue of the Spirit dwelling in every believer, then the scriptures are clear in all things necessary to salvation to the meanest believer. But the former is true : 1 Cor. ii. 15. 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things ;' 1 John ii. 20, 27. 'Ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things. The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you ; but the same anointing teacheth you of all things.' Consider to whom John

is there speaking, not only to learned men and great divines, but to all believers, even to little children; to all that have the Spirit, which is common to all; 'for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

(4.) The things that are necessary to salvation are hid only to unbelievers, in whom the God of this world hath blinded their eyes; as for others, God himself hath taught them, 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.

(5.) God hath promised to write his law in his people's hearts, and that he himself will teach them to know himself, Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.; therefore the scripture must needs be perspicuous and clear in things necessary to salvation; for that which is written in our hearts cannot be but clear unto us; and that which God himself teacheth us cannot be obscure, for who teacheth like God?

(6.) If the scriptures be not clear in themselves to all believers, but that all its perspicuity depends on the interpretation of the church, then our faith is to be ultimately resolved into the testimony of man; but that cannot be, for human testimony is not infallible and authentic, and therefore cannot found divine faith and an infallible persuasion. The reason of the consequence is clear. Hearers are obliged, if they will not pin their faith on men's sleeves, to compare the interpretations given by men, with the scriptures themselves; which is utterly unpracticable, unless the scriptures be clear in themselves in such things as are necessary to salvation.

(7.) The perspicuity of the scripture appears, if ye consider their author, who is God himself, the Father of lights; and the end for which he gave the scriptures unto the church, viz. that they might be a rule of faith and life. Of his power to speak plainly, who can doubt? and the end for which they are given may sufficiently satisfy as to his will to speak so; for how can they be a rule to us, if wrapt up so as we cannot understand them without the church's interpretation, in those things that are necessary to salvation?

2. It is a perfect rule. There is nothing necessary to be believed or done, but what is to be found there. It is a perfect rule for us to walk by in the way to heaven and glory. What can be more desired than that in the text, It is *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction*,

tion in righteousness? 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' Psal. xix. 7. The scriptures were written that men might have life, John xx. 31. and comfort and hope in all conditions, Rom, xv. 4. But I insisted on this more fully in the preceding doctrine.

3. It is the only rule. Every doctrine taught any manner of way in religion must be brought to this rule, and if it agree not with it, must be rejected, Isa. viii. 20. Hereby traditions must be tried, Matth. xv. 3.; and spirits or revelations, 1 John iv. 1.; and nothing must be added to it, Prov. xxx. 6. Rev. xxii. 18. I shall shut up with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. The opinions of fathers, decrees of councils, acts of assemblies, covenants, and ministers sermons, are not the rule of faith to us; nor can any of them bind us but in so far as they are agreeable to the word of God, by which all of them must be judged and examined, Isa. viii. 20.

2. Translations of the scriptures into the vulgar languages are most necessary and profitable. How otherwise should the unlearned read them, if they were not translated? It was by the means of these translations that Romish Babel was brought down at the Reformation, as by the division of tongues the building of old Babel was hindered. And that makes the Papists such enemies to translations of the scriptures. We have reason to bless God for human learning, by which these translations are made, seeing the prophets and apostles wrote in languages which but few understand.

3. This may give us a just abhorrence of Popery, which almost in every point on this head casts dust on the scriptures. The Papists deny the necessity of translations; will not allow the people the free reading of the Bible; cry out on it for its obscurity; accuse it of imperfection; and add their traditions to it, that it may not be the only rule. And thus they blaspheme both God and his word, and expose themselves to that direful threatening, Rev. xxii. 18.

4. This may also give us a just detestation of Quakerism, which sets up the light within men, which in very deed is nothing but a natural conscience, and the spirit without the scriptures, to be a rule to men. But their light is but darkness, and their spirit a spirit of darkness and delusion, if

It agree not with the scriptures, Isa. viii. 20. and must be tried and examined by the scriptures, 1 John iv. 1. The Quakers are a dangerous set of people that overturn the foundation of true religion.

5. This may likewise give us a just abhorrence of the superstition and ceremonies of the church of England, wherewith they have corrupted the worship of God, rejecting the simplicity of gospel-worship, and regulating their worship in many things not by the scripture, but the dregs of Antichrist: Deut. iv. 2. 'Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you.' What word? Statutes, ver. 1. ceremonies and rites of worship. To baptize with water is Christ's command: but who has added the sign of the cross? Christ instituted the sacrament of the supper: but who has added kneeling, to overturn the table-gesture, which we have from Christ's own example? The Lord's day is of divine institution: but whose are the numerous holidays observed in the church of England? Matth. xv. 9. What is all this but an accusing the scripture of imperfection, as if God had not laid down a sufficient rule to teach us how we may glorify him: as if they were ashamed of simple scripture-worship, but they must deck it up in the whorish garments made by their own brains? God has a special zeal for his worship; and it becomes us to quicken our zeal for it, in a time when enemies are bringing in innovations in worship into this church, and setting up their Dagon beside the ark. But though God should, for our contempt of our pure worship, plague the land with this superstitious worship once more, yet as sure as Babylon shall fall, it shall fall and flee before the glory of the latter days.

6. *Lastly*, Be exhorted to study the holy scriptures. Read them in your families, and read them in secret, and cry for the Holy Spirit, who dictated them, to make you understand them. Lock them not up in your chests, and let them not lie dusty in your windows, as too many do to their shame and disgrace, lest the dust of them witness against you. Prefer the Bible to all other books, as the book whereof God himself is the author. Prize and esteem it, as shewing you the way to salvation, as a lamp to your feet, and a light to your paths.

THE SCOPE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

1 TIM. I. 13.—*Hold fast the form of sound words—in faith and love.*

IN these words there is, (1.) The character of scripture-doctrine; it is *sound words*; sound and pure in itself, and sound in its effects, being of a soul-healing virtue, Ezek. xlvii. 9. (2.) The sum of it, *faith*, shewing what we are to believe; and *love*, what we are to do, 1 John v. 3. John xiv. 15. This love has a particular relation to Christ, all our obedience being to be offered unto God through him, as our faith fixes on God through him. This was what the apostle preached. (3.) Our duty with respect to it; to *hold fast the form of sound words*. This signifies, [1.] To have a pattern of the doctrine in our minds, to which all that ministers teach must be conformable. (2.) To hold it fast; to cleave to, and keep hold of it, without flinching from it, whatever dangers or difficulties may attend the doing so. Both these senses are implied in the words.

The text affords the following doctrinal proposition.

DOCT. "The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."

As to the matter of scripture-doctrine,

1. Some things are taught in the scriptures less principally; that is, the main design of the scriptures is not to teach these things; neither are they taught for themselves, but for the respect they have to other things. Thus in the scripture we may learn the knowledge of several natural things, as of the nature of some trees, birds, beasts, &c. of husbandry, the customs of several nations, especially of the Jews, &c. But these and such like things are only taught in the scripture, as having some respect to our faith and obedience. So the vine tree is described, Ezek. xv. to hold forth the uselessness of barren professors, &c. However, whatsoever is taught in the scriptures, seeing the scripture is God's word, is all to be received by divine faith, though all scripture-truths are not of equal importance.

2. The scripture teaches some things chiefly. And these

are faith and obedience. These are the two parts of the doctrine of the Bible. Whatsoever concerns religion, or the salvation of souls, in the Old and New Testament, may be reduced to one of these two heads: It is either an article of faith, or a point of obedience.

Here I shall consider,

I. The nature of faith and obedience, and the connection betwixt the two.

II. The manner of the scripture's teaching.

III. The sense of scripture.

IV. Shew that the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures is the supreme judge of controversies in religion.

I. Let us consider the nature of that faith and obedience which the scripture teaches, with the connection betwixt the two.

First, As to faith. Divine faith is a believing of what God has revealed, because God has said it, or revealed it. People may believe scripture-truths, but not with a divine faith, unless they believe it on that very ground, the authority of God speaking in his word. And this divine faith is the product of the Spirit of God in the heart of a sinner, implanting the habit or principle of faith there, and exciting it to a hearty reception and firm belief of whatever God reveals in his word. And the faith which the scripture teaches, is what a man is to believe concerning God. This may be reduced to four heads: What God is, the persons in the Godhead, the decrees of God relating to every thing that comes to pass, and the execution of them in his works of creation and providence. Now, though the works of creation and providence shew that there is a God, yet that fundamental truth, that God is, and the doctrines relating to the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Essence, God's acts and purposes, the creation of all things, the state of man at his creation, his fall, and his recovery by the mediation and satisfaction of Christ, are only to be learned from the holy scriptures. Hence we may infer,

1. That there can be no right knowledge of God acquired in an ordinary way without the scriptures, Matt. xxii. 29. "Ye do err (said Christ to the Sadducees), not knowing the scriptures." As there must be a dark night where the

light is gone, so those places of the earth must needs be dark, and without the saving knowledge of God, that want the scriptures. Thus the Apostle tells the Ephesians, that, before they were visited with the light of the gospel, they were "without Christ; being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. ii. 12.

2. That where the scriptures are not known, there can be no saving faith. For, says the Apostle, Rom. x. 14, 15, 17. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

3. That there is nothing we are bound to believe as a part of faith but what the scripture teaches, be who they will that propose it, and whatever they may pretend for their warrant. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isa. viii. 20. No man must be our master in these things: 'For one is our master, even Christ,' Matth. xxiii. 10. He is Lord of our faith, and we are bound to believe whatever he has revealed in his word.

Secondly, As to obedience, it is that duty which God requires of man. It is that duty and obedience which man owes to God, to his will and laws, in respect of God's universal supremacy and sovereign authority over man; and which he should render to him out of love and gratitude. The scriptures are the holy oracle from whence we are to learn our duty, Psal. xix. 11. 'By them is thy servant warned,' says David. The Bible is the light we are to take heed to, that we may know how to steer our course, and order the several steps of our life. 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path,' says the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 105. From whence we may infer.

1. That there can be no sufficient knowledge of the duty which we owe to God without the scriptures. Though the light of nature does in some measure shew our duty to God,

yet it is too dim to take up the will of God sufficiently in order to salvation.

2. That there can be no right obedience yielded to God without them. Men that walk in the dark must needs stumble ; and the works that are wrought in the dark will never abide the light ; for there is no working rightly by guess in this matter. All proper obedience to God must be learned from the scriptures.

3. That there is no point of duty that we are called to, but what the scripture teaches, Isa. viii. 20. forecited. Men must neither make duties to themselves, or others, but what God has made duty. The law of God is exceeding broad, and reaches the whole conversation of man, outward and inward, Psal. xix. and man is bound to conform himself to it alone as the rule of his duty.

Thirdly, As to the connection of these two, faith and obedience are joined together, because there is no true faith but what is followed with obedience, and no true obedience but what flows from faith. Faith is the loadstone of obedience, and obedience the touchstone of faith, as appears from Jam. ii. *passim*. They that want faith cannot be holy ; and they that have true faith, their faith will work by love. Hence we may see,

1. That faith is the foundation of duty or obedience, and not obedience or duty the foundation of faith, Tit. iii. 8. and that the things to be believed are placed before the things to be practised, in order to distinguish between the order of things in the covenant of grace, and what they were under the covenant of works. Under the latter, doing, or perfect obedience to the law, was the foundation of the promised privilege of life ; but under the former, the promise is to be believed, and the promised life is to be freely received : and thereupon follows the believer's obedience to the law, out of gratitude and love for the mercy received. This appears from the order laid down by God himself in delivering the moral law from mount Sinai. He lays the foundation of faith, first of all, in these words, ' I am the Lord thy God,' &c. which is the sum and substance of the covenant of grace ; and then follows the law of the ten commandments, which is as it were grafted upon this declaration of sovereign grace and love, Exod. xx. 2, —18. And let it be remembered, that the Apostle Paul calls

gospel-obedience the obedience of faith as springing from and founded upon faith. And if we examine the order of doctrine laid down in all his epistles, we shall find, that he first propounds the doctrine of faith, or what man is to believe, and upon that foundation inculcates the duties that are to be practised.

2. That all works without faith are dead, and so cannot please God. For whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and without or separate from Christ we can do nothing. Faith is the principle of all holy and acceptable obedience.

3. That those who inculcate moral duties without discovering the necessity of regeneration, and union with Christ, as the source of all true obedience, are foolish builders; they lay their foundation on the sand, and the superstructure they raise will soon be overturned; and they pervert the gospel of Christ. Such would do well to consider what the Apostle says, Gal. i. 9. 'If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.'

II. I proceed now to consider the manner of the scripture's teaching.

1. The scripture teaches some things expressly in so many words; as, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,' &c. Other things it teaches by good and necessary consequence; as, that infants are to be baptized. Now, whatever can be proved by just and necessary consequence from sacred writ, is all one, as to the binding power on mens consciences, as if it were taught there in so many words, whether it be in points of faith or obedience.

2. The scriptures teach but externally. It is the Spirit that teaches internally. The scriptures externally reveal what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man; but the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the scriptures, for several reasons which I mentioned in the former discourse, and shall not now repeat.

III. I come now to consider the sense of the scripture.

1. The sense of the scripture is but one, and not manifold. There may be several parts of that one sense subordinate one to another; as some prophecies have

a respect to the deliverance from Babylon, the spiritual by Christ, and the eternal in heaven; and some passages have one thing that is typical of another: yet these are but one full sense, only that may be of two sorts; one is simple, and another compound. Some scriptures have only a simple sense, containing a declaration of one thing only; and that is either proper or figurative. A proper sense is that which arises from the words taken properly, and the figurative from the words taken figuratively. Some have a simple proper sense, as, 'God is a Spirit, God created the heavens and the earth;' which are to be understood according to the propriety of the words. Some have a simple figurative sense; as, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away,' &c. These have but one simple sense; but then it is the figurative, and is not to be understood according to the propriety of the words, as if Christ were a tree, &c. Thus you see what the simple sense is. The compound or mixed sense is found wherein one thing is held forth as a type of the other; and so it consists of two parts, the one respecting the type, the other the antitype; which are not two senses, but two parts of that one and entire sense intended by the Holy Ghost: *e. g.* Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that those who were stung by the fiery serpents might look to it and be healed. The full sense of which is, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that, &c. even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' Here is a literal and mystical sense, which make up one full sense betwixt them. Those scriptures that have this compound sense, are sometimes fulfilled properly (or literally, as it is taken in opposition to figuratively) in the type and antitype both; as Hos. xi. 1. 'I have called my Son out of Egypt,' which was literally true both of Israel and Christ. Sometimes figuratively in the type, and properly in the antitype, as Psal. lxxix. 21. 'They gave me vinegar to drink.' Sometimes properly in the type, and figuratively in the antitype, as Psal. ii. 9. 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.' Compare 2 Sam. xii. 31. Sometimes figuratively in both, as Psal. xli. 9. 'Yea mine own familiar friend—hath lifted up

his heel against me ; which is meant of Ahitophel and Judas. Now the sense of the scripture must be but one, and not manifold, that is, quite different and no wise subordinate one to another, because of the unity of truth, and because of the perspicuity of the scripture.

2. Where there is a question about the true sense of scripture, it must be found out what it is by searching other places that speak more clearly, the scripture itself being the infallible rule of interpreting of scripture. Now that it is so, appears from the following arguments.

(1.) The Holy Spirit gives this as a rule, 2 Pet. i. 20. 21. After the apostle had called the Christians to take heed to the scripture, he gives them this rule for understanding it, 'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, *tes ideas e-piluseos*, of our own exposition. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man ; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' As it came ; so it is to be expounded : but it came not by the will of man ; therefore we are not to rest on men for the sense of it, but holy men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and so never erring ; therefore we are to look to the dictates of the same Spirit in other places.

(2.) There are several approved examples of this, comparing one scripture with another, to find out the meaning of the Holy Ghost ; as Acts xv. 15. 'And to this agree the words of the prophet,' &c. The Bereans are commended for this, Acts xvii. 11. Yea, Christ himself makes use of this to shew the true sense of the scripture against the devil, Matth. iv. 6. 'Cast thyself down, (said that wicked spirit) : for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee,' &c. Ver. 7. 'It is written again, (says Christ), Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' And thus our Lord makes out the true sense of that scripture, that it is to be understood only with respect to them who do not cast themselves on a tempting of God. Some more will occur concerning this point under the next head.

This then is the great, chief, and infallible rule of interpretation of scripture, to compare one passage with another. Other things may be added as helps and means in order to the finding out the true sense.

1. The knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek, in which languages the prophets and apostles wrote, is an excellent mean to the right understanding of the scriptures. These original tongues are the best commentaries on scripture ; and many times it is found so by those that know them.

2. Diligently consider the scope and design of the Holy Ghost in the portion of scripture where ye find difficulty, the coherence and context, with all circumstances going before and following. *Nullo est objectio in lege quæ non habet solutionem in latere* says a rabbi, *Quis scopus, impellens, sedes, tempusque, locusque, et modus, hæc septem scripture attendito lector.*

3. Distinguish proper from improper words. The scripture frequently uses improper and figurative expressions, which, if taken as the letters sound, will found a very absurd sense.

4. The commentaries of godly and learned writers are not to be neglected.

5. The reading also of profane history is of notable use in the knowledge of the prophetic writings. And the knowledge of the Jewish customs brings great light to the scriptures.

6. *Lastly*, Always take heed to the analogy of faith, and see there be no deviating therefrom : for the Spirit of God speaking in the scripture is always one and the same ; and therefore we are never to think that one scripture can be contrary to another, or the known doctrine of the Bible and the form of sound words : *e. g.* ‘This is my body which is broken for you ;’ it cannot be so understood as if Christ’s body were locally present in the sacrament ; because we believe, according to the constant doctrine of scripture, that Christ is ascended into heaven, and will come again at the last day ; and till then the heavens must contain him. So we must not take the words literally, when it is contrary to modesty, as when Isaiah is bid go naked, Isa. xx., 2. ; or to piety, to cut off the right hand, &c. More particularly,

1. Go to God for his spirit to teach you, Psal. cxix. 18. It is Christ’s work to give people to understand the scriptures. If you would know what Paul says, pray for the spirit by which he wrote.

2 Take heed of a carnal, earthly, and fleshly mind. When

the heart is carnal, the mind is much blinded, and so utterly unfit for searching the scriptures.

3. Endeavour to be exercised unto godliness. An exercised frame proves sometimes an excellent commentator.

4. *Lastly*, Endeavour to practise what you know.

IV. I proceed to shew that the spirit of God speaking in scripture is the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest.

This is a very important point, and upon it depends the whole of religion. One man says so, another man says otherwise : the question is, Who shall be judge, and to whose determination are we to stand and acquiesce in? Four sundry ways do men go here.

First, Enthusiasts set up the private spirit, and its revelations, without the Spirit, for the judge of controversies. But whatever these may pretend, the scripture is our only rule. For,

1. Whatever revelation or light men may pretend to, God binds them and us to the written word, Isa. viii. 20. 'If they speak not according to the scriptures,' it is not true light, but 'because there is no light in them,' that makes it so : for going against the word, they shew themselves to be acted with a spirit of delusion, 1 John iv. 6.

2. The Apostle Paul devotes them to a curse, though they were angels, who preach any other gospel than what he preached, and the Galatians received from his hand, Gal. i. 8, 9. ; not only a gospel contrary to it, but *another*, any thing diverse from or besides it, though not contrary to it. And if it be contrary, the Spirit is contrary to himself, for he is the author of the scriptures.

3. We are commanded to 'try the spirits,' 1 John iv. 1. Now, how must they be tried but by a rule ; and what rule have we to try them by but the written word? This was the rule which the Bereans made use of to try the spirit of the apostles, for which they are highly commended. It is that rule which Christ sends the Pharisees to try his own doctrine by, John v. 40. But by the scriptures we cannot try the spirits, unless we lay them to that rule, and observe

whether or no the spirits speak as the scriptures do ; and then how can the new revelations be received ?

4. The spirits revelations are either a complete or partial rule. If our complete rule, then the scriptures are useless which is blasphemous, and contrary to all those commands that requires us to give attendance to reading, searching, &c. of them. If they be a partial rule only, then they either teach according to the scripture, or not. If according to it, then it is no new revelation, but what the scripture already affords us. If not, it is because there is no light in them Is. viii. 20.

There is one scripture that we must more narrowly inquire into, both because it is abused by the adversaries in this point, and affords us an argument for our doctrine. The passage is 2. Pet. i. 19. 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' Enthusiasts here, by the day star arising in the heart, understand some extraordinary revelation and light which God sets up in the soul, which when it is set up, the person is to take heed to the written word no longer. But, (1.) Whither would these men drive us ? They tell us, that all men have a light within them, according to which they must walk ; and this is the spirit within us ; yet must we still expect a new light to turn us off from the scriptures ; (2.) The apostle here prefers plainly the word of prophecy unto an immediate voice from heaven, and that in the very same thing wherein they both agree : how much more preferable is the scripture to new revelations ? (3.) This supposes, that the apostles and believers in those days had not this light ; for they say, 'We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.' This being so, we envy not the Quakers their light, which the apostles and these Christians were strangers to.

Some by the day dawning and the day-star arising understand the more clear dispensation which they suppose is to come in the latter days. Others understand by it the sight of God and Christ in glory, till which time the scriptures must be made use of, but no longer. Others understand this as spoken to the believing Jews in reference to the pro-

phets of the Old Testament, to which they did well to take heed, till their gospel light should shine more clear. Some say, that the word *until* is not to be taken exclusively of the time following that dawning of the day, and day star arising; and thereby understand simply more clear light arising after some darkness, which the people of God may be in for a time; till which light arising they are to take heed to the scriptures; not that they are then to give over taking heed to them. Laying aside that which relates to a more clear dispensation yet to come, because it supposes that then the scriptures must be laid aside, which is very contrary to the scripture, for the Spirit shall never in this life jumble out the word, but his office is to teach, not new things unwritten, but whatever Christ spoke to his disciples: 'He shall bring all things to your remembrance, (says he), whatsoever I have said unto you,' John xiv. 26.: Laying aside that, it is hard to determine which of the rest is indeed the true meaning of the apostle. Only it seems to bid fairest for the apostle's sense, to say, that he speaks of the more clear knowledge of Christ which the believers at that time were afterwards to have, till which time they did well to take heed to the prophetic word, as it is in the Greek; that is, to the doctrine of the prophets who prophesied of Christ; not that they were then to lay by the use of the prophets but that then they would be of less use to them than before, when they should attain to a more clear gospel-light; as the candle is of less use when the day dawns than it was before, though it be still useful. And I think it abundantly plain, that the word of prophecy is not here to be understood generally of the whole scripture, as the other interpretations seem to take it, but particularly of the doctrine of the prophets concerning Christ and the gospel, as appears from the phrase, *the prophetic word*, and the first verse of the following chapter, where he speaks of false prophets that were among the people of the Jews. So by the day-star I understand Christ himself, who is called *the morning star*, Rev. xxii. 16. It is true it is here *Pharpharos*, but there *oster or-nithes*: but, for ought I know, the first of these is *apax legomenon*; and though the words be different, the sense is the same, one thing gets but different names. And Christ is called the day-star or morning-star, which we know are both one thing; because, (1.) As the morning-star is the most emi-

nent among the stars, and most lucid, as appears by its shining when the appearance of the sun makes the rest disappear; so there is none like Christ among the sons, Cant. ii. 3. (2.) As the day-star puts an end to the dark night, so doth Christ's arising in the soul put an end to the night of spiritual darkness. Never was the sight of the day-star so refreshing to the weary traveller in the night, as Christ's appearance in and to the soul; only the apostle calls him here rather the day-star than the sun, because he is speaking of his appearance in this life, whereas the full knowledge of him is deferred till his second coming. So the day-dawning is easily understood. And this is expected to rise not absolutely, but comparatively in respect of degrees of fuller manifestation, as he promises to those that continue in his word, and are his disciples indeed, that they shall know the truth, viz. more fully, John viii. 31, 32. And that passage, Hos. vi. 3. 'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning,' doth excellently serve to shew us this truth. So there he hath respect to this further manifestation of Christ which they were afterwards to have: but they are not then to give over the prophetic word; for, as was before noticed, the word *until* is not always exclusive of the following time, as Psal. cx. 1. 2 Sam. vi. *ult.*

Now, if the writings of the prophets be more sure than a voice from heaven, and Christians are commended for taking heed to the same; and when the day-star ariseth in the heart, it shews only the same thing more clearly. What place is there left for new revelations against or besides the scriptures?

Secondly, The Papists set the church upon the tribunal: but what that church is, they do not agree among themselves, whether it be the pope, or a council, or both together. However, they assert that there is in the church a visible and infallible judge of controversies in religion. This we deny, and far more that the pope, or a council approved by him, is such a judge. For.

1. The scripture makes no mention of any such judge, in any of the places where the officers of the church are reckoned up, as Rom. xii. 7. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 11. nor any where else. And though negative theology, as they say, is not argumentative, yet that cannot have place here, unless

we deny the perfection of the scripture, which we have proved already. A positive institution is requisite here.

2. Our faith must not lean upon the testimony or authority of man, 1 Cor. vii. 23. 'Be not the servants of men,' not bodily but spiritually; 2 Cor. i. 24. 'Not that we have dominion over your faith;' where the apostle declines, in his own name, and in the name of his fellows, the being of such a judge. But our faith leans on the word of God, Eph. ii. 20. 'And are built on the foundation of the prophets,' &c.

3. The doctrine of the church should be examined by the scriptures, Acts xvii. 11. 'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.' Now he whose sentence is to be examined by another, cannot be the supreme judge of controversies. See Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'

4. Neither pope nor council, conjunctly nor severally, have such properties as are requisite to constitute a supreme judge in controversies of religion; they have no infallibility, or testimony thereof; yea, they have many ways deceived and been deceived. We may appeal from them, as being bound to the scriptures, as well as others. And the church, be what it will, must not be judge in its own cause.

5. *Lastly*, Here is a controversy in religion, Who is the supreme judge of controversy in religion? Who must decide this, or be supreme judge here? The church cannot, neither pope nor council so decide it in their own favour. That were absurd. Wherefore the Papists themselves are obliged to make another judge of this controversy; and if so, why not of all?

Thirdly, The Socinians set up reason to be the supreme judge of controversies in religion, to whose determination we ought to stand, and therein to acquiesce. There is no doubt but we have much use for reason in matters of religion; as, (1.) To perceive and understand the things revealed in the scripture, Matth. xiii. 51. (2.) To collate them one with another, Acts xvii. 11. (3.) To explain the same, Neh. viii. 8. (4.) To argue from the scriptures, Matth.

xxi. ult. (5.) To vindicate the truths from objections, Rom. ix. 19, 20. That it is not the judge nor the rule, that is, that reason ought not to be admitted of itself, and according to its principles, to determine controversies of religion, is what we assert. To illustrate this by an example, the scripture says, *These three are one*; we say we plainly perceive the scripture says so; and therefore, though our reason cannot comprehend, we will believe it, because it is plain the scripture says so. They say, they cannot believe that there are three persons in the Godhead, and not three gods, because reason is against it; and therefore finding the thing unagreeable to reason, though it were in ever so plain words found in the scripture, they will not believe (as they pretend) it means as the words sound, but will fasten another meaning on the words though never so far fetched. And that it may not be thought that this is the same way that the orthodox go too, in explaining scriptures that are understood figuratively, I shall give an example of that too. The scripture says, Christ is a vine, a door, the bread is his body, &c. We know indeed that this is contrary to reason if expounded literally: but that is not the prime reason why we reject the literal meaning, and on which we build our faith as to the true meaning, as the case is with the Socinians, but because it agrees not with other scriptures to understand it so; which testify that Christ is God and man. Now, that reason is not the supreme judge of controversies in religion, is proved by the following arguments.

1. Reason in an unregenerate man is blind in the matters of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;' Eph. iv. 17-18. Eph. v. 8. *Except.* This only respects reason not illustrated by divine revelation. *Ans.* By that illustration of reason by divine revelation, they understand either subjective or objective illustration. If they understand it of subjective illustration, they quit that article of their religion, wherein they believe that the mind of man is capable of itself, without the illumination of the Spirit, to attain sufficient knowledge of the mind of God revealed in the scripture. If of objective illustration, by the mere revelation of these truths, then it is false that they assert: For the apostle opposes here the natural man to the

spiritual man ; and therefore by the natural man is understood every unregenerate man, even that has these truths revealed to him ; for, says the apostle, ‘ they are foolishness unto him.’ Now, how can he judge them foolishness if they be not revealed ?

2. Reason is not infallible, and therefore cannot be admitted judge in matters concerning our souls. Reason may be deceived. Rom. iii. 4. and is not this to shake the foundations of religion, and to pave a way to scepticism and atheism ? *Except.* That is not to be feared where sound reason is admitted judge. But what talk they of sound reason ? The adversaries themselves will yield, that reason is unsound in the most part of men. We say, that it is not fully sound in the world ; for even the best know but in part ; darkness remains in some measure on the minds of all men.

3. Reason must be subject to the scripture, and submit itself to be judged by God speaking there, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. ‘ The weapons of our warfare are—mighty—to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations,—and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.’ Matters of faith are above the sphere of reason ; and therefore as sense is not admitted judge in those things that are above it, so neither reason in those things that are above it, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

4. If reason were the supreme judge of controversies, then our faith should be built on ourselves, and the great reason why we believe any principle of religion would be, because it appears so and so to us ; which is most absurd. The scripture teaches otherwise, 1 Thess. ii. 13. ‘ Ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God.’ Most plainly does our Lord teach this, John v. 34, ‘ I receive not testimony from men ;’ chap. v. 39. ‘ Search the scriptures.’

Fourthly, The orthodox assert the supreme judge of controversies in religion to be the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures. This is proved by the following arguments.

1. In the Old and New Testament, the Lord still sends us to this judge. So that we may neither turn to the right hand nor left from what he there speaks, Deut. v. 32. & xvii. 11. ‘ According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee ;’ Is. viii. 20. ‘ To the law and to the testimony,’ &c. ; Luke xvi. 29. ‘ They have Moses and the prophets ;

let them hear them ;' John v. 39. ' Search the scriptures.' Some hereto refer that passage, Matth. xix. 28. ' Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' In this sense it must be meant of the doctrine they taught, as dictated to them by the Holy Ghost.

2. It was the practice of Christ and his apostles to appeal to the Spirit speaking in the scriptures, Matth. iv. where Christ still answers Satan with that, ' It is written.' And so while discoursing with the Sadducees about the resurrection, Matth. xxii. 31, 32. So also in John, chap. v. and x. and Luke xxiv. 44. And so did others, Acts xvii. 11. and xxvi. 22, 23. 2 Pet. i. 19. Acts xv. 15, 16. A careful examination of which passages I recommend to you for your establishment in the truth.

3. To the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures, and to him only, agree those things that are requisite to constitute one the supreme Judge. (1.) We may certainly know that the sentence which he pronounces is true, for he is infallible, being God. (2.) We cannot appeal from him, for he is one above whom there is none. (3.) He is no respecter of persons, nor can be biassed in favour of one in preference to another.

Having discussed the doctrinal part of this subject, I shall now conclude with two or three inferences.

Inf. 1. People then should diligently read and study the holy scriptures, in order to their knowing what to believe and what to do. As the scripture is the only rule and test of faith and obedience, let us accomplish a diligent search into it, that we may understand all matters to be believed and practised in order to our salvation, and reject every dictate and every precept, come from what quarter it will, if it be not taught us in the sacred records. We are not to believe any thing to be an article of faith, or a duty that we are to perform, unless it has the sanction of the Spirit of God in the written word, and be enjoined us by that infallible Judge. Let it then be our daily care and principal study to acquaint ourselves with the word of God, and draw from that infallible treasury all our knowledge as to faith and practice.

2. How dangerous must it be to maintain opinions and practices which are evinced to be contrary to the word of God? How hazardous must be the state of those who hold doctrines contrary to and eversive of the foundations of Christianity? Many such doctrines are taught and propagated in our day; such as the tenets of Socinians and Arians, who degrade the Son of God to the rank of a mere creature, and deny his supreme Godhead and essential glory, and impugn his satisfaction; the Arminians, who overturn the doctrine of original sin, assert free will, and stickle for the resistibility of grace, and other things eversive of the doctrine of the Bible; and others who set up creeds, confessions, and covenants of human manufacture, in the place of the infallible oracles of truth.

3. How worthy of reproof are they who make no conscience of reading the scriptures? They seldom look into them, or at most only on a sabbath-day, without giving attention to what they read; and so are grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion.

4. Religion, if it be of the right sort, will be practical religion. A blind obedience, or ignorant obedience, to some of the duties of religion is no better than bodily exercise, which profiteth little. All right obedience flows from a principle of faith in the heart. True faith will always be productive of, and accompanied with good works. And it is in vain for men to say they have religion, unless they abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. Let us then shew our faith by our works, in having a respect unto all the commands of God, and doing whatsoever he has enjoined us in his word.

THE SCRIPTURES THE BOOK OF THE LORD, AND THE DILIGENT STUDY AND SEARCH THEREOF RECOMMENDED AND URGED.

ISAIAH XXXIV. 16.—*Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.*

HAVING considered the divine authority of the holy scriptures, and their scope, I come now to recom-

commend unto you the diligent study and search of these sacred oracles, from the text now read.

In the former part of this chapter, there are most terrible threatenings denounced against the enemies of God and his church, which receive not their full accomplishment till the last day, as appears from ver. 4, 10. In the text there is the confirmation of the whole. And therein we have,

1. An intimation that all shall be accomplished according to the word. Wherein two things are to be observed.

(1.) The study of the word required. Where we may notice, (1.) The honourable epithet given to it, *The book of the Lord*. Thus the holy scripture is called, as being of divine original and authority, God himself being the author of it. It is true, that in Isaiah's days, even the canon of the Old Testament was not completed, some of the historical books, and of the prophetic too, not being then written. But the body of the doctrine of the word was comprised in the law, or five books of Moses; and what was afterwards written, was but a building on that foundation, by enlargement, explication, and application. And this prophecy looking as far as the end of the world, the Spirit of God might here have an eye to the complete canon of the Old and New Testament. [2.] The study of it recommended, *Seek out of it*. The word signifies to *inquire, search, seek out*; and imports diligence and earnestness in consulting a thing to learn from it. And so it is emphatically pointed, to denote a vehemency and intensity of spirit in the study. It does in a great measure answer that word, Acts xvii. 11—*Searched the scriptures*. We are not only to seek from it, but out of it, or, as the Hebrew signifies, *from in* it, or, as in the Greek, *to* it, and seek *from* it. [3.] The way to study, *read* it. Do not satisfy yourselves to hear it, but read it with your own eyes. For the eye makes ordinarily deeper impression than the ear.

(2.) The accomplishment in the most minute circumstance. [1.] Whereas the Lord had named a great many horrible creatures that should possess the dwellings of his enemies, *none of them shall fail*, they shall all be there. [2.] Whereas he had said they should have their mates, that so their kinds might be continued there, *none of them shall want their mate* for that purpose.

2. The confirmation or reason of this accomplishment

according to the word. And it hath two parts, namely, that he has spoke the one, and will effectuate the other.

(1.) Himself has spoke the word: *My mouth it hath commanded.* His truth is engaged for its accomplishment. He has commanded, not these creatures, but the word or book, as Psal. cv. 8.—*The word he commanded:* and God is said to command his word, for that he gives it as a lawgiver, of supreme authority. And so this answers to the first part of the intimation.

(2.) He will effectuate the thing in accomplishment of the word: His Spirit will gather these creatures. So his power is engaged to make it forthcoming. There seems to be here a remarkable change of the persons. But I am mistaken if *the mouth of the Lord* be not one of the names of Christ in the scripture: Thus, Isa. lxii. 2.—‘Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.’ Jer. xxiii. 16. ‘They speak—not out of the mouth of the Lord.’ Compare John i. 18. ‘No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.’ Heb. i. 1, 2. ‘God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.’ And so the words run very plainly and exactly according to the original, *For my mouth he hath commanded, and his Spirit it hath gathered them.*

Two doctrines naturally arise from the words, viz.

Doctr. I. ‘The holy scripture is the book of the Lord.’

Doctr. II. ‘The scripture is a book to be read, carefully, and diligently searched, consulted, and sought into.’

As it is the last of these doctrines I mainly intend to discourse from, I shall be very brief in the illustration of the first: and though some things to be spoken upon it interfere with what has been already delivered, I hope it will tend to your establishment in the truth, and the more endear the holy scripture to you.

Doctr. I. ‘The holy scripture is the book of the Lord.’

All I intend upon this head is to shew,

I. In what respects the holy scripture is the book of the Lord.

II. That it is so.

III. Make a short improvement.

I. My first province is to shew in what respects the holy scripture is the book of the Lord.

1. The Lord is the subject-matter of that book, as the book of the wars of the Lord. It is the commendation of a book, that it treats of a noble subject; and this book treats of God, the great scope of it being to shew what God is, and what his will is. Hence we are commanded to 'hold fast the form of sound words,' 2 Tim. i. 13. If we would know God, and our duty to him, we must turn to this book and learn it.

2. The Lord is the author of it, 2 Tim. iii. 16. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.' And who was fit to make a book on that noble subject but himself? John i. 18. forecited. It is the product of his own unerring Spirit, and so his own book in a most proper sense. It is for this reason that it is called 'the book of the Lord.' It is true, several hands were employed in the writing of it; but yet all and every part of it was from the Lord.

(1.) The motion to write was from the Lord, by a particular impulse on the spirits of the holy penmen, which influenced them to the work, and carried them on it, 2 Pet. i. 21. 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' Sometimes they had particular express calls, but they had always this motion powerfully determining and inclining them to the work.

(2.) The matter of their writing was from him. He laid it to their hands, 2 Tim. iii. 16. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.' Some things were matters of pure revelation, that could not be known otherwise; such as things past, whereof there was no manner of record, things to come, things without the reach of mens knowledge, as the thoughts of others. These things they had by immediate suggestion. Some things they might have by other records, their own judgment, or memory. In these the Spirit of the Lord infallibly guided them what to chuse and refuse, strengthened their judgment and memories, so that they could not mistake, John xvi. 13. 'The Spirit of truth—will guide you into all truth.'

(3.) The very words they wrote were from him. The apostles spoke the very words of the Holy Ghost, and far more wrote so, 1 Cor. ii. 13. And therefore God is said to

speaking by and in the holy penmen, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. Luke i. 70. Acts i. 16. He did not give them the matter to put in their own words, but put the words in their hearts too, but in a manner suited to their native style. And truly it is hard to conceive how the inspiration of the holy scriptures could reach the end without it, seeing so much depends on the suitable expressing of matter.

II. I proceed to shew, that the holy scripture is the book of the Lord. This is evident from many things, of which I shall only observe a few.

1. This book discovers what no mortal could ever have done, and nowise could be had but by divine revelation, as the history of the creation, what was done before man was on the earth, the sublime mysteries of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Son of God, and the eternal counsels of God concerning man's salvation.

2. The perfect holiness of the doctrine. It commands all holiness, forbids all impurity in heart and life, under the pain of damnation: which shews it could neither be the work of men, being so far above their reach, and cross to their corrupt nature; nor of evil angels, being so opposite to Satan's kingdom; nor of good ones, who could never have put a cheat on the world, making their own words pass for God's.

3. The efficacy of the doctrine in its searching and convincing the conscience, Heb. iv. 12.; converting souls from their most beloved lusts, even when nothing can be expected from the world for such a change, Psal. xix. 7.; rejoicing the heart under the deepest distresses, ver. 8. This is not from any virtue in the letters or syllables, but from the Spirit, whose instrument it is.

4. The miracles wherewith it has been confirmed. These were wrought to confirm the doctrine, Mat. ix. 6. These are God's seal, which he will never put to a lie.

5. *Lastly*, There is an inward sensation of this in the spirits of those that have their senses exercised. For it is not to be doubted, but as the works of God bear the marks of a divine hand, so his word also does. And while there are such manifest differences betwixt one voice and another of men, how can it be thought, but the voice of God has a peculiar signature on it? If that be not discerned by others, it is by his own people that know his voice.

I shall now make a short improvement of this point.

USE I. For information. It informs us, that,

1. The scripture is the best of books. They who heard Christ, said, 'Never man spake like this man;' and they that see the true glory of the scriptures must own, never did any write like these writings. There we have the true picture of the great Author, in spotless holiness; there the revelation of his mind with respect to our salvation. Whatever other books there be in the world relating to our salvation; they are but dim tapers lighted at this burning lamp.

2. They are enemies to God that are enemies to the scriptures, whether in their principles, as Papists and others, or in their practices. For if men loved God, they would love his word, Psal. cxix. 97. And men, by their relish of the word, may know what case their souls are in. For according as they relish the scriptures, so is it with their souls. If they have lost the gust of them, it is evident that either they have no grace, or that it is not in exercise.

3. Wo to those whom the Bible condemns; and these are all wicked men and hypocrites, whatever their stations or professions be. But happy they whom it approves and justifies; and these are all the sincere seekers of God. Seek to be of the number of the latter, and then none of the woes denounced in God's word shall fall upon you.

USE II. Of exhortation.

1. Let us highly prize this book for the sake of the Author. The Ephesians thought that they had good ground to be zealous for the image of Diana, because they fancied it fell down from Jupiter, Acts xix. 35. Your Bible is a book really come from God; let us be ashamed we do not prize it more, by using it diligently to the ends for which it was given the church.

2. Let us believe it in all the parts thereof; the commands, that we may study to conform ourselves to them; the promises, that we may thereby be encouraged to a holy life; and the threatenings, that we may be thereby deterred from sin. Alas! though we own it to be the word of God, that we are no more moved with it than if it were the word of man, and such a man as we give little credit to. For compare the lives of the most part with it they say, it is but idle tales.

3. Let us submit our souls to it, as to the oracles of the living God. He is the great Lawgiver, and in that book

he speaks ; let us own his authority in his word, and submit to it as the rule of our faith and life, without disputing or opposing.

4. *Lastly*, Let us study to be well acquainted with it, and make it our business to search the scriptures. This brings me to the main thing I intend.

DOCT. II. "The scripture is a book to be read, carefully and diligently searched, consulted, and sought into,"

If ye ask, by whom this is to be done? it is by all into whose hands, by the mercy of God, it comes. Some never had it, and so they will not be condemned for slighting of it, Rom. ii. 12. Magistrates are called to look to it, and be much conversant in it, Josh. i. 8. 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayst observe to do according to all that is written therein.' Deut. xvii. 18, 19. 'And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life ; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them.' Ministers are in a special manner called to the study of it, 1 Tim. iv. 13. 'Give attendance to reading.' 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' But not they only are so commanded, but all others within the church, John v. 39. 'Search the scriptures.' Deut, vi. 6, 7. 'These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.'

In discoursing further from this point, I shall,

I. Explain this seeking into the book of the Lord.

II. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

III. Make application.

I. I am to explain this seeking into the book of the Lord. And here I will shew,

1. What is presupposed in this seeking.

2. What is the import of a studious inquiry into the scriptures.

FIRST, I am to shew what is presupposed in this seeking into the book of the Lord. It presupposes,

1. That man has lost his way, and needs direction to find it, Psal. cxix. 176. 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant.' Miserable man is bemisted in a vain world, which is a dark place, and has as much need of the scriptures to direct him, as one has of a light in darkness,' 2 Pet. i. 19. What a miserable case is that part of the world in that want the Bible? They are vain in their imaginations, and grope in the dark, but cannot find the way of salvation. In no better case are those to whom it has not come in power.

2. That man is in hazard of being led farther and farther wrong. This made the spouse say, 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?' There is a subtle devil, a wicked world, corrupt lusts within one's own breast, to lead him out of the right way, that we had need to give over, and take this guide. There are many false lights in the world, which, if followed, will lead the traveller into a mire, and leave him there.

3. That men are slow of heart to understand the mind of God in his word. It will cost searching diligently ere we can take it up, John v. 39. Our eyes are dim to the things of God, our apprehensions dull, and our judgment is weak. And therefore, because the iron is blunt, we must put too the more strength. We lost the sharpness of our sight in spiritual things in Adam; and our corrupt wills and carnal affections, that favour not the things of God, do more blind our judgments: and therefore it is a labour to us to find out what is necessary for our salvation.

4. That the book of the Lord has its difficulties, which are not to be easily solved. Therefore the Psalmist prays, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law,' Psal. cxix. 18. Philip asked the eunuch, 'Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?' There are depths there wherein an elephant may swim, and will exercise the largest capacities, with all the advantages they may be possessed of. God in his holy providence has so ordered it, to stain the pride of all glory; to make his word the liker

himself, whom none can search out to perfection, and to sharpen the diligence of his people in their inquiries into it.

5. That yet we need highly to understand it, otherwise we would not be bidden search into it. 'Of the times and seasons (says the apostle), ye have no need that I write unto you;' and therefore he wrote not of them. There is a treasure in this field; we are called to dig for it; for tho' it be hid, yet we must have it, or we will pine away in our spiritual poverty.

6. *Lastly*, That we may gain from it by diligent inquiry. The holy humble heart will not be always sent empty away from these wells of salvation, when it plies itself to draw. There are shallow places in these waters of the sanctuary, where lambs may wade.

SECONDLY, I proceed to shew what is the import of a studious inquiry into the scriptures. This holds out the matter and manner of the duty.

First, As for the matter of the duty; it lies in three things.

1. We should be capable to read the scriptures distinctly. Alas! How shall they study the book of God that cannot so much as read it? Isa. xxix. 12. It is sad to think that there are among Christians who call God their Father, and cannot read his testament; who say they would be at heaven, and yet cannot consult the directions for the way. And if their parents have neglected to teach them, they have not the grace to make up that by their own industry. Their case is little better that cannot read it distinctly; for without that there can be little benefit got by it. Neh. viii. 8.

2. We should acquaint ourselves with the letter of the scriptures, the histories, prophecies, precepts, &c. This Timothy is commended for, 'that from a child he had known the holy scriptures,' 2 Tim. iii. 15. That is the sacred field where the treasure lies; the blessed body, where the soul of the scripture lodgeth; the words wherein the mind of God towards sinners is held forth, Mat. xiii. 52.

3. We ought to labour to understand the mind of God in them, and that savingly and spiritually. Wisdom lies in the book of the Lord; and see what course we should take to get at it, Prov. ii. 4, 5. 'If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God.' To read the scriptures just for reading's sake, with-

out labouring to understand what ye read, is very unprofitable work. Nay we should search narrowly till we find the sense and meaning of what we read, as one that digs deep, breaks the clods of earth; till he finds the gold ore.

Secondly, As to the manner of the duty; it imports,

1. A high esteem of the treasure to be found in the book of the Lord, Matth. xiii. 44. People will not be at the pains to seek into what they do not value. If men did not prize gold, they would not rip up the bowels of the earth for it. It is the undervaluing of the scriptures that makes people so little to study and seek into them.

2. A design of spiritual profit by the scripture. No wise man will be at pains but to gain thereby. And he that would aright study the holy scriptures, must design his soul's advantage thereby. We should come to the reading of the book of the Lord, as to a soul-feast, Psal. cxix. 131; as to the gathering of spoil after battle, Psal. cxix. 162. Some read the scriptures to furnish their heads with notions of the things of religion, and their tongues with talk about them; but read ye for holiness to your hearts, and to rule your walk thereby. Some read them to support their errors, and some for matter of jest and drollery; which are horrible work. But 'search ye the scriptures: for in them ye will find eternal life; and they are they that testify of Christ,' John v. 39.

3. A serious application of the heart to the work; for it will not be a by-hand work, Psal. i. 2. In the scriptures God speaks to us, as in prayer we speak to God; and when God speaks, we should listen attentively. The angels pry into scripture-mysteries, 1 Pet. i. 12. So should we into the scriptures, James i. 25.

4. Painfulness in the study. Silver and gold are not to be gathered up by every lazy passenger from the surface of the earth, as stones are, but must with labour be digged out of the bowels of it, Prov. ii. 4. forecited. This is the gate of heaven; and there must be striving to get in at it. It is not easy to overcome a dark, carnal, hard heart, which unfits us for the study of the scriptures. And indeed many get but little advantage by their reading it; for dig they cannot, and beg they will not; and therefore they go empty from these wells of salvation.

5. Diligence and constancy, 1 Pet. i. 10. It is the hand

of the diligent that maketh rich in all cases, while drowsiness cloaths a man with rags. See the duty of a Christian with respect to the word, Psal. i. 2. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' He suffers not his Bible to gather dust.

Lastly, A thorough search. We should go through every leaf of the book of the Lord, and endeavour to acquire the knowledge of the whole scriptures. For 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,' 2 Tim. iii. 16. Some never read all the Bible in their days, but pick out portions here and there only. Searchers do not so, but look into every corner. And we should labour to know more and more of what we have some insight into: for this Bible says one, contains a punchon that hitherto has not been pierced.

II. The next general head is, to give the reasons of the point, that the book of the Lord should be read, carefully and diligently searched, consulted, and sought into.

1. Because the way of salvation is to be found only therein, John v. 39. forecited. This is the star risen in a dark world, to guide us where Christ is. All the searches of the wise men of the world, all the inventions of men, can never guide us to Immanuel's land, John i. 18. 'No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Here, and here only, the counsels of God touching man's salvation are discovered. And so, as salvation is the most necessary thing, the study of the scriptures, is the most necessary exercise. To slight it, is to judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life.

2. It is the only rule of our faith and lives, Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Eph. ii. 20. 'Ye are built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,' Rev. xxii. 18, 19. 'I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of

life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.' The Bible is the pattern shewn on the mount, to which our faith and lives must be conformed, if we would please God. The Lord says to us, as Deut. xxviii. 14. 'Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left.' None can walk regularly unless they observe the rule; but how can one observe it unless he know it? Matt. xxii. 29. God has given each of us our post in the world: the Bible is the book of our instructions; and shall we not study it? The lawyer studies his law-books, the physician his medical books; and shall not a Christian study the book of the Lord?

3. The Lord himself dictated it, and gave it us for that very end, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. forecited, Rom. v. 4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.' And has the spirit of the Lord written it, and will not we read it? Has he given it us to be studied by us, and will we slight it? This must be horrid contempt of God, and ingratitude to him with a witness. Whose image and superscription is this on the scriptures? Is it not the Lord's? Then take it up and read.

4. We must be judged by the scriptures at the great day, John xii. 48. That is one of the books opened, Rev. xx. 12. This is the book of the Lord's laws and ordinances, by which he will proceed in absolving or condemning us. I own God will go another way to work with those who never had the Bible, Rom. ii. 12. But know thou, that seeing it is in the country where thou livest, though thou never readest a letter of it, thou must be judged by it. Is there not good reason then for reading the scriptures?

III. I proceed now to the practical improvement of this important subject.

USE I. Of information. It lets us see,

1. The necessity and advantage of translations of the scriptures into the vulgar languages, as I have formerly shewn.

2. The people not only may without any licence from the church-guides, but must read the scriptures, for God has commanded it. The Papists here take away the key of knowledge; for their kingdom riseth and standeth by darkness, and ignorance of the scriptures.

3. The scriptures, whatever difficulties be in them, yet are so plain in things necessary to salvation, that even the unlearned may reap advantage by reading of them.

USE II. Of exhortation. I exhort one and all of you to the study of the holy scriptures, to *seek out of the book of the Lord, and read.* I will lay this before you in several branches, before I come to the motives.

1. Let such as cannot read, learn to read. Ye that have children, as ye tender their immortal souls, cause them learn to read the Bible. Remember therefore the vows taken upon you at their baptism, and the duty laid upon you by the Lord himself, Eph. vi. 4. 'Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' 2 Tim. iii. 15. Timothy from a child knew the holy scriptures. Ye who got no learning when ye were young, labour to get it now. Alas ! some parents, or others that have had some when young with them, have been cruel to their souls, as the ostrich to her young. They have learned them to work, but have been at no pains to learn them to read ; so have sent them out into the world a prey to the devourer's teeth, without the ordinary means of the knowledge of God. Thus they are destroyed with bloody ignorance.

But will ye pity your own souls, though others did not that brought you up ? And do not enter yourselves heirs to their sin, by being as negligent of yourselves as they were. Though perhaps they left you nothing to live upon, yet for a livelihood ye have done for yourselves. And will you do nothing for your souls ?

Think not it will excuse thee at the hand of God, that thou art a servant ; for thy soul is in as great danger as thy master's, and ignorance of religion will destroy it, Is. xxvii.

11. There are few but know how to improve the scarcity of servants to the raising of the fee ; but will you improve it by getting it in your condition to learn to read, and seek out such families where you may have that advantage, for some such there are, like Abraham's, Gen. xviii.

10. Nay rather than not do it, give over service for a time, and learn.

Neither will it excuse you that now you have a family ; for you have an immortal soul still, which gross ignorance of the mind of God in the scriptures will ruin eternally, 2 Thess,

i. 8. **And the more need you have to read the scriptures, that you have a family, that you may know the Lord's mind yourself, and teach it your family.** Such an excuse will no more screen you from everlasting destruction, than covering yourself with leaves will save you from the flames of a devouring fire.

Say not you are too old now to learn. It is never out of time to learn to do well for your eternal salvation. If your eyes can serve you to learn, you ought to do it, whatever your age be. But if your sight be so far gone, that you cannot though you were ever so willing; then tremble at the thoughts of the awful judgment of God that has taken away sight from you, that when you had it would not use it for his glory, and the good of your own soul; and humble thyself, and apply to the blood of Christ, for this thy neglect, lest it prove ruining to thee for ever. And cause others read to you, and beg the teaching of the Spirit, if so be such an old careless slighter of salvation may find mercy.

2. Let such as can read procure Bibles. I dare say one that has a love to the Bible (and that all who love the Lord have) will make many shifts ere they want one. But they must be lawful shifts: for stealing of Bibles, or keeping them up from the owners, is like a thief stealing a rope to hang himself in. But spare it off your bellies or your backs, and procure one rather than want.

3. Let such as have Bibles read them frequently, and acquaint themselves with the book of the Lord. Read them in your families morning and evening; and read them in secret by yourselves; it should be a piece of your duties in secret. Make the Bible your companion abroad and at home, in the house and in the field. It is lamentable to think how unacquainted with the Bible many are, and how little heart they have to it. Ballads and song-books get the place of the Bible with many; and many have no use for it but once in the week, on the sabbath-day, as if it were more for a shew with them than the necessity of their souls.

4. *Lastly*, Not only read it, but search into it, and study it, to know the mind of God therein, and that ye may do it. Be not superficial in your reading of the scriptures, but do it with application, painfulness, and diligence; using all means to read it with understanding; breaking through the surface that ye may come at the hid treasure therein. Reading as

well as praying by rote is to little purpose ; for a parcel of bare words will neither please God, nor edify your own souls.

I shall now give some motives to enforce this important duty of reading the scriptures.

Mot. 1. God requires it of us, he commands us to do it, John v. 39. 'Search the scriptures.' The Jews had once the scriptures committed to them ; but did God design they should only have them in the temple ? nay, in their houses also : Only laid up in the ark ? nay, he designed another chest for them, even their hearts, Deut. vi. 6, 7. formerly cited. Let the authority of God sway you, then, and as you have any regard to it, study the scriptures.

Mot. 2. Nay, the very being of the Bible among us is enough to move us to study it, seeing it is that by which we must stand or fall for ever. The proclaiming of the law publicly is sufficient to oblige the subjects ; and they cannot plead ignorance, though they get not every one a copy of it. *Ignorantia juris excusat neminem* ; for every one ought to know the rule of his duty. And sinners will be condemned by it, if they conform not to it, whether they knew it or not, John iii. 19.

Mot. 3. It is an exercise very pleasing to God, so that it be done in a right manner, namely, in faith. For thereby God speaks to us, and we hear and receive his words at his mouth ; and obedient ears are his delight.

1. The Spirit of God commends it. It was the commendation of the Bereans, Acts xvii. 11. of Apollos, chap. xviii. 24. of Timothy, 2 Tim. iii. 15. And why does the Spirit of God commend others for this, but to recommend the scriptures to us ?

2. There is a particular blessing annexed to this exercise, Rev. i. 3. 'Blessed is he that readeth.' And the children of God in all ages have sucked the sap of it, while they have had sweet fellowship with God in his word, and the influences of the Spirit, to the quickening, enlightening, fructifying and comforting their souls.

Mot. 4. Consider what a great privilege it is, that we have the scriptures to read and study, at this day. If Christ had not died for our salvation, the world had never been blessed with this glorious light, but had been in darkness

word. It was David's companion and bosom oracle, Psal. cxix. 97. Daniel at Babylon searches the scriptures of the prophets, Dan. ix. 2. So did the noble Bereans, Apollos, and Timothy.

3. Yea, the spirit of God makes it the character of a godly man, Psal. i. 2. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' O how rational is that! The man that is born of God has a natural desire after the word, as the child after the mother's breast, 1 Pet. ii. 2. The new nature tends to communion with God; it is by the word the soul has communion with him, for thereby God speaks to us. And therefore it is a sad sign, that there are few true Christians, while there are so few that diligently ply the word.

Mot. 6. Consider the excellency of the scriptures. There is a transcendent glory in them, which whoso discern cannot miss to hug and embrace them. To commend the Bible to you, I shall say these eight things of it.

1. It is the best of books. They may know much, ye think, that have many good books; but have ye the Bible, and ye have the best book in the world. It is the book of the Lord, dictated by unerring infinite wisdom. There is no dross here with the gold, no chaff with the corn. Every word of God is pure. There is nothing for our salvation to be had in other books, but what is learned from this. They are but the rivulets that run from this fountain, and all shine with light borrowed from hence. And it has a blessing annexed to it, a glory and majesty in it, an efficacy with it, that no other book has the like. Therefore Luther professed he would burn his books he had writ, rather than they should divert people from reading the scriptures.

2. It is the greatest and most excellent of the works of God to be seen in the world, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. If the world beautified with sun, moon, and stars, be as a precious ring, the Bible is the diamond in the ring. The sparkling stars, and that glorious globe of light the sun, yet leave but a dark world, where there is no Bible. Were it put to the choice of the saints, either to quit the sun out of the firmament, or the Bible out of the world, they would chuse the former, but never the latter; for that they cannot want till they go there where they shall read all in the face of Jesus. For that must needs be most excellent that has most of God in it.

3. It is the oracles of God, Rom. iii. 2. This was the chief of the Jewish privileges, without which their temple, altar, &c. would have been but dumb signs. The Pagan world did highly reverence and prize the devil's oracles: but we have God's oracles, while we have the scriptures that manifest to us the secrets of heaven. And if we discern aright who speaks in them, we must say, The voice of God, and not of man. Here is what you may consult safely in all your doubts and darknesses; here is what will lead you into all truth.

4. It is the laws of heaven, Psal. xix. 7. The Lord and King of heaven is our great Lawgiver, and the laws are written in this book. It concerns us to study it. Hence we must prove our title to heaven, the blessed inheritance, or we will never obtain it. From hence the sentence of our justification must be drawn, else we are still in a state of wrath. Here is the rule we must follow, that we may please God here; and from this book shall the sentence of our absolution or condemnation be drawn at the great day.

5. It is Christ's testament and latter-will, 1 Cor. xi. 25. Our Lord has died, and he has left us this Bible as his testament; and that makes his children have such an affection to it. Herein he has left them his legacy, not only moveables, but the eternal inheritance; and his last will is now confirmed, that shall stand for ever without alteration. So all the believer's hopes are in this Bible, and this is the security he has for all the privileges he can lay claim to. This is his charter for heaven, the disposition by which he lays claim to the kingdom. And therefore, if ye have any interest in the testament, ye must needs not be slights of it.

6. It is the sceptre of his kingdom, Psal. cx. 2. and it is a sceptre of righteousness. It is by this word he rules his church, and guides all his children in their way to the land that is far off. Wherever he hath a kingdom, he wields it; and the nations subjecting themselves to him, receive it. And where he rules in one's heart, it has place there too, Col. iii. 16. It is a golden sceptre of peace, stretched forth to rebels to win them by offering them peace; to fainting believers, to give them peace. And whosoever will not subject themselves to it, shall be broken with his rod of iron.

7. It is the channel of influences, by which the communications of grace are made, and the waters of the sanctuary

flow into the soul, Isa. lix. ult. The apostle appeals for this to the experience of the Galatians, chap. iii. 2. 'Received ye the Spirit by the law, or by the hearing of faith?' Is the elect soul regenerated? the word is the incorruptible seed, whereof the new creature is formed, 1 Pet. i. 23. Is faith begotten in the heart? it is by the word, Rom. x. 17. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Is the new creature to be nourished, strengthened, quickened, actuated, &c.? Christ is the fountain, faith the mouth of the soul, the word the pipes of conveyance, whereat faith must suck, as the child at the nipples.

8, *Lastly*, It is the price of blood even the blood of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 25. Had not the personal Word become flesh, and therein died to purchase redemption for us, we had never seen this written word among us. For it is the book of the covenant which is founded on the blood of the Mediator. It is the grant and conveyance of the right to the favour of God, and all saving benefits to believers; for which there could have been no place had not Christ died. And they that slight it, will be found to tread under foot the blood of the covenant.

Mot. 7. Consider the usefulness of the word. If we consider the Author, we may be sure of the usefulness of the work. The apostle tells us, that it alone is sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. There is no case a soul can be in, but it is suitable to their case, that desire to make use of it. To commend it to you from its usefulness, I will say these eight things.

1. It is a treasure to the poor, and such are we all by nature, Rev. iii. 17. 2 Cor. iv. 7. Therefore the Lord bids us search the scriptures, in allusion to those that search in mines for silver and gold. If the poor soul search here, receiving the word by faith, he is made up. He shall find there the discharge of his debt, a new right and title to the mortgaged inheritance. This word of the Lord is a treasure,

(1.) For worth. People make not treasures of any but valuable things. There is nothing in the scriptures but what is highly valuable. There are the eternal counsels of God touching our salvation; life and immortality brought to light; there are the purest precepts, the most

awful threatenings, and the most precious promises, 2 Pet. i. 4, &c.

(2.) For variety. In the scriptures shines the manifold wisdom of God. They that nauseate this book of the Lord, because they find not new things in it after some time perusing it, discover their senses not to be exercised to discern. For should we come to it ever so often, bringing fresh affections with us, we would find fresh entertainment there; as is evident by the glorious refreshment sometimes found in a word, that has been often gone over before without any thing remarkable. And truly the saints shall never exhaust it while here; but as new discoveries are made in it in several ages, so it will be to the end.

(3.) For abundance. There is in it not only for the present, but for the time to come, Isa. xlii. 23. There is abundance of light, instruction, comfort, &c. and what is needful for the saints travelling heavenward, Psal. cxix. 162. And indeed it is the spoil to be gathered by us. Our Lord having fought the battle against death and devils, here the spoil lies to be gathered by us that remained at home when the fight was.

(4.) *Lastly*, For closeness. This word contains the wisdom of God in a mystery. It is a hid book to most of the world, and indeed a sealed book to those that remain in their natural blindness. Nor can we get into the treasure without the illumination of the same Spirit which dictated it, 1 Cor. ii. 10. There is a path here which the vulture's eye hath not seen, which the carnal eye cannot take up, ver. 14. Therefore have we need to seek diligently, and pray, as Psal. cxix. 18. 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.'

2. It is life to the dead: 'The words that I speak unto you (says Christ), they are spirit, and they are life,' John vi. 63. We are naturally dead in sins; but the word is the means of spiritual life. It is the ordinary means of conversion, Psal. xix. 7. 'The law of the Lord—converteth the soul;' and of regeneration, 1 Pet. i. 23. 'Being born again of incorruptible seed by the word of God.' By it the soul is persuaded into the covenant, and brought to embrace Jesus Christ. For thereby the Spirit is communicated to the elect of God. Thus it is of use to bring sinners home to God, from under the power of darkness to the kingdom of his dear Son.

3. It is light to the blind, Psal. xix. 8. 'The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' It is a convincing light, to discover one's state to him, and so to rouse up the soul from its natural security. It pierces the heart as an arrow, and makes the careless sinner stand and consider his way: for it freely tells every one his faults, Jam. i. 25. And while the child of God travels through a dark world, it serves to light him the way, 2 Pet. i. 19.—'a light shining in a dark place;' and lets him see how to set down every step. Hence David says, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,' Psal. cxix. 105.

4. It is awakening to those that are asleep, Cant. vii. 9. It is the voice of God which is full of majesty, to awaken the sleepy Christian to the exercise of grace. For as it is the means of begetting grace in the heart, so it is also the means of actuating and quickening thereof, Psal. cxix. 50. 'Thy word hath quickened me.' Here the Christian may hear the alarm sound to rise up and be doing. Here are the precious promises as cords of love to draw, and the awful threatenings to set idlers to work.

5. It is a sword to the Christian soldier, Eph. vi. 17. 'The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' Whoever has a mind for heaven must fight his way to it; for none get the crown but the conquerors, Rev. iii. 21. They must go through many temptations, from the devil, the world, and the flesh; and the word is the sword for resisting of them. It is an offensive and defensive weapon. We see how our Lord Jesus wielded it, Mat. iv. 4, 7. 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.—It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' And whatever be our temptations, if we be well versed in the word, we may from thence bring answers to them all.

6. It is a counsellor to those who are in straits, doubts, and difficulties, Psal. cxix. 24. 'Thy testimonies are—my counsellors.' Many a time the children of God, when tossed with doubts and fears, have found a quiet harbour there; and have got their way cleared to them there, when they knew not what to do. And no doubt, if we were more exercised unto godliness, and looking to the Lord in our straits, we would make more use of the Bible, as the oracles of Heaven.

7. It is a comforter to those that are cast down, Psal. cxix. 49, 50. 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.' The way to heaven lies through many tribulations, and afflictions are the trodden path to glory. But the Lord has left his people the Bible as a cordial to support them under all their pressures from within and without. And indeed the sap of the word, and the sweetness of the promises, are never more lively relished, than when the people of God are exercised under afflictions. Then does that heavenly fountain flow most plentifully, when, created streams being dried up, the soul goes for all to the Lord. To sum up all in one word,

8. *Lastly*, It is a cure for all diseases of the soul, Prov. iv. 22. 'My words are—health to all their flesh.' There is no malady that a soul is under, but there is a suitable remedy for it in the word, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. frequently quoted above, being adapted by infinite wisdom to the case of poor sinners. By it the simple may be made wise, the weak strengthened, the staggering confirmed, the hard heart melted, the shut heart opened, &c. it being the means the Spirit makes use of for these and all other such purposes.

Mot. 8. Consider the honourable epithets given to the scriptures. Amongst which I name only three.

1. The scriptures of truth, Dan. x. 21. Men may wrest the scriptures to patronise their errors, but the whole word of God is most pure truth. Here are no mistakes, no weaknesses, that adhere to all human composures. Here we may receive all that is taught us without hesitation. The hearers of men, or readers of their works, are divided into four sorts: Some like sponges, that suck up all, both good and bad: Some like sand glasses, who, what they receive at the one ear let go at the other: Some like a strainer, that lets all the good pass through, but keeps the dregs: Some like the sieve, that keeps the good grain, and lets through what is not worth. These last are only to be approved; but in the reading of the word we must be as the first sort.

2. Holy scriptures, 2 Tim. iii. 15. They are the word of a holy God, from whom nothing can come but what is holy. It consists of holy commands, holy promises, holy threatenings, instructions, directions, &c. And holy hearts will love and reverence them for that very reason.

3. *Lastly*, The book of the Lord. What can be said more to commend it to us, if we have any regard to the Lord himself? If I could tell you of a book that fell down from heaven, and were to be had by any means, who would not be curious to have such a book and study it? This is the book that contains the counsels of Heaven, and is given from Heaven to the church, to let men see the way to it.

Mot. ult. Consider the danger of slighting the word. It exposes to sin, and consequently to the greatest danger. How can they keep the way of the word that do not study to acquaint themselves with it? They must needs walk in darkness that do not make use of the light; and this leads to everlasting darkness, John iii. 19. If by this word we must be judged, how can they think to stand that neglect it?

I conclude with some directions for the study of the scriptures.

1. Keep an ordinary in reading of them, that ye may be acquainted with the whole; and make this reading a part of your secret duties. Not that ye should bind up yourselves to an ordinary, so as never to read by choice, but that ordinarily this tends most to edification. Some places are more difficult, some may seem very bare for an ordinary reader; but if you would look on it all as God's word, not to be slighted, and read it with faith and reverence, no doubt ye would find advantage.

2. Set a special mark, one way or other, on those passages you read, which you find most suitable to your case, condition, or temptations; or such as ye have found to move your hearts more than other passages. And it will be profitable often to review these.

3. Compare one scripture with another, the more obscure with that which is more plain, 2 Pet. i. 20. This is an excellent means to find out the sense of the scriptures; and to this good use serve the marginal notes on Bibles. And keep Christ in your eye, for to him the scriptures of the Old Testament (in its genealogies, types, and sacrifices) look, as well as those of the New.

4. Read with a holy attention, arising from the consideration of the majesty of God, and the reverence due to him. This must be done with attention, (1.) To the words; (2.) To the sense: and (3.) To the divine authority of the scripture, and the bond it lays on the conscience for obedience, 1 Thess. ii. 13,

5. Let your main end in reading the scriptures be practice, and not bare knowledge, Jam. i. 22. Read that you may learn and do, and that without any limitation or distinction, but that whatever you see God requires, you may study to practise.

6. Beg of God and look to him for his Spirit. For it is the Spirit that dictated it, that it must be savingly understood by, 1 Cor. ii. 11. And therefore before you read, it is highly reasonable you beg a blessing on what you are to read.

7. Beware of a worldly fleshly mind: for fleshly sins blind the mind from the things of God; and the worldly heart cannot favour them. In an eclipse of the moon the earth comes between the sun and the moon, and so keeps the light of the sun from it. So the world, in the heart, coming betwixt you and the light of the word, keeps its divine light from you.

8. Labour to be exercised unto godliness, and to observe your case. For an exercised frame helps mightily to understand the scriptures. Such a Christian will find his case in the word, and the word will give light to his case, and his case light into the word.

9. *Lastly*, Whatever you learn from the word, labour to put it in practice. For to him that hath shall be given. No wonder they get little insight into the Bible, who make no conscience of practising what they know. But while the stream runs into a holy life, the fountain will be the freer.

OF GOD AND HIS PERFECTIONS.

JOHN iv. 24.—*God is a Spirit.*

SIMONIDES, a heathen poet, being asked by Hiero king of Syracuse, *What is God?* desired a day to think upon it; and when that day was at an end, he desired two days; and when these were past, he desired four days. Thus he continued to double the number of days in which he desired to think of God, ere he would give an answer. Upon which the king expressing his surprise at his behaviour, asked him, What he meant by this? To which the poet answered, 'The more I think of God, he is still the more dark and unknown to me?' Indeed no wonder that he made such an answer;

for he that would tell what God is in a measure suitable to his excellency and glory, had need to know God even as he is known of him, which is not competent to any man upon earth. Agur puzzles the whole creation with that sublime question, *What is his name?* Prov. xxx. 4. But though it is impossible in our present state to know God perfectly, seeing he is incomprehensible; yet so much of him is revealed in the scriptures as is necessary for us to know in order to our salvation.

The text tells us, and it should be remembered, that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and who only can reveal him, is here the speaker, that *God is a spirit*. It is but little of the nature of spirits that we, who dwell in tabernacles of clay, are so intimately connected with flesh and blood, and so naturally impressed with sensible objects, can know. We cannot fully understand what our own spirits or souls are; and less do we know of the nature of angels, who are of a superior nature to us; and far less can we know of the spiritual nature of the Divine Being, which is utterly incomprehensible by men or angels. However, as all our ideas begin at what is infinite, in considering the nature of spirits, so we are led to conceive of God as infinitely more perfect than any finite spirit*. All we can know of spirits is,

1. That a spirit is the most perfect and excellent of beings, more excellent than the body, or any thing that is purely material.

2. That a spirit is in its own nature immortal, having nothing in its frame and constitution tending to dissolution or corruption.

3. That a spirit is capable of understanding, willing, and putting forth actions agreeable to its nature, which no other being can do.

* It will not be improper here to subjoin the following observation of the celebrated Mr Addison. 'If we consider the idea which wise men, by the light of reason, have framed of the Divine Being, it amounts to this, That he has in him all the perfection of a spiritual nature; and since we have no notion of any kind of spiritual perfection but what we discover in our own souls, we join infinitude to each kind of these perfections, and what is a faculty in a human soul becomes an attribute in God. *We* exist in place and time, the Divine Being fills the immensity of space with his presence, and inhabits eternity. *We* are possessed of a little power and a little knowledge, the Divine Being is almighty and omniscient. In short, by adding infinity to any kind of perfection we enjoy, and by joining all these different kinds of perfections in one being, we form our idea of the great Sovereign of nature.'

Now these conceptions of the nature of spirits lead us to conceive of God.

1. As a being that is more perfect and excellent than all other spirits and beings. Hence he is said to be *incorruptible*, Rom. i. 23.; *immortal* and *invisible*, 1 Tim. i. 17. He has understanding and will; and so we conceive of him as the creator and governor of all things; which he could not be, if he were not an intelligent and sovereign spirit.

2. Though angels and the souls of men are spirits, yet their excellency is only comparative, that is, they excel the best of all material beings in their nature and properties. But God, as a spirit, is infinitely more excellent than all material beings, and all created spirits. Their perfections are derived from him; and therefore he is called 'the Father of spirits,' Heb. xii. 9. and 'the God of the spirits of all flesh,' Numb. xvi. 22.; and his perfections are underived; and he is independently immortal. Hence it is said of him, that 'he only hath immortality,' 1 Tim. vi. 16. He is an infinite spirit; and it can be said of none but him, that 'his understanding is infinite,' Psal. cxlvii. 5.

Now, a spirit is an immaterial substance, Luke xxiv. 39.; and seeing whatever God is, he is infinitely perfect in it, he is a most pure spirit. Hence we may infer,

1. That God has no body nor bodily parts. *Object.* How then are eyes, ears, hands, face, and the like, attributed in scripture to God? *Answ.* They are attributed to him not properly, but figuratively; they are spoken of him after the manner of men, in condescension to our weakness; but we are to understand them after a sort becoming the Divine Majesty. We are to consider what such bodily parts serve us for, as our eyes for discerning and knowing, our arms for strength, our hands for action, &c. and we are to conceive these things to be in God infinitely, which these parts serve for in us. Thus, when eyes and ears are ascribed to God they signify his omniscience; his hands denote his power, and his face the manifestation of his love and favour.

2. That God is invisible, and cannot be seen with the eyes of the body, no not in heaven; for the glorified body is still a body, and God a spirit, which is no object of the eyes, more than sound, taste, smell, &c. 1 Tim. i. 17.

3. That God is the most suitable good to the nature of our souls, which are spirits; and can communicate himself,

and apply those things to them, which only can render them happy, as he is the God and Father of our spirits.

4. That it is sinful and dishonourable to God, either to make images or pictures of him without us, or to have any image of him in our minds, which our unruly imagination is apt to frame to itself, especially in prayer. For God is the object of our understanding, not of our imagination. God expressly prohibited Israel to frame any similitude or resemblance of him, and tells them, that they had not the least pretence for so doing, inasmuch as they ‘saw no similitude of him, when he spake to them in Horeb,’ Deut. iv. 12, 15, 16. And says the prophet, ‘To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?’ Isa. xl. 18. We cannot form an imaginary idea of our own souls or spirits, which are absolutely invisible to us, and far less of him who is the invisible God, whom no man hath seen or can see. Therefore to frame a picture or an idea of what is invisible, is highly absurd and impracticable: nay, it is gross idolatry, prohibited in the second commandment.

5. That externals in worship are of little value with God, who is a spirit, and requires the heart. They who would be accepted of God must worship him in spirit and in truth, that is, from an apprehension and saving knowledge of what he is in Christ to poor sinners. And this saving knowledge of God in Christ is attainable in this life: for it is the matter of the divine promise, ‘I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord,’ Jer. xxiv. 7. ‘It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God,’ John vi. 45. And therefore it should be most earnestly and assiduously sought after by us, as, unless we attain to it, we must perish for ever.

That we may know what sort of a spirit God is, we must consider his attributes, which we gather from his word and works, and that two ways: 1. By denying of, and removing from God, in our minds, all imperfection which is in the creatures, Acts xvii. 29. And thus we come to the knowledge of his incommunicable attributes, so called because there is no shadow or vestige of them in the creatures, such as infinity, eternity, unchangeableness. 2. By attributing unto him, by way of eminency, whatever is excellent in the creatures, seeing he is the fountain of all perfection in them, Psal. xciv. 9. And thus we have his communicable at-

tributes, whereof there are some vestiges and small scantlings in the creature, as being, wisdom, power, &c. amongst which his spirituality is to be reckoned.

Now, both these sorts of attributes in God are not qualities in him distinct from himself, but they are God himself. God's infinity is God himself, his wisdom is himself; he is wisdom, goodness, 1 John i. 5. Neither are these attributes so many different things in God; but they are each of them God himself: for God swears by himself, Heb. vi. 13.; yet he swears by his holiness, Amos iv. 2. He creates by himself, Isa. xlv. 24.; yet he creates by his power, Rom. i. 20. Therefore God's attributes are God himself. Neither are these attributes separable from one another; for though we, through weakness, must think and speak of them separately, yet they are all truly but the one infinite perfection of the divine nature, which cannot be separated therefrom, without denying that he is an infinitely perfect being.

We have said that God is a spirit; but angels and the souls of men are spirits too. What then is the difference between them? Why, God is an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable spirit; but angels and souls are but finite, were not from eternity, and are changeable spirits. Now, these three, infinity, eternity, and immutability, are God's incommunicable attributes, which we are next to explain.

First, God is infinite. Infinity is the having no bounds or limits within which a thing is contained. God then is infinite, i. e. he is whatsoever he is without bounds, limits, or measure, Job xi. 7. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection;' We cannot define the presence of God by any certain place, so as to say, Here he is, but not there; nor by any limits, so as to say, Thus far his being reacheth, and no further: but he is every where present, after a most inconceivable manner, even in the deepest darkness, and the closest recesses of privacy. He fills all the innumerable spaces that we can imagine beyond this visible world, and infinitely more than we can imagine.

Now God is infinite, (1.) In respect of his being: for of his nature our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conception. This lies hid in rays of such bright and radiant glory, as must for ever dazzle the eyes of those who attempt to look into it. (2.) In respect of place; and

therefore he is every where present : ‘ Can any man hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord,’ Jer. xxiii. 24. (3.) In respect of time and duration : for the ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, ‘ nor the number of his years searched out,’ Job xxxvi. 26. (4.) In respect of all his communicable attributes. Thus the depth of his wisdom cannot be fathomed : ‘ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !’ Rom. xi. 33. ‘ His greatness is unsearchable,’ Psal. cxlv. 3. The extent of his power cannot be reached : ‘ The thunder of his power who can understand?’ Job xxvi. 14. We cannot understand his powerful thunder, one of the lowest displays of his majesty in our region, much less the utmost extent and force of his power, in its terrible effects, especially the power of his anger : ‘ God is great, and we know him not.’ The treasures of the divine goodness cannot be inventoried : ‘ O how great is thy goodness (says the Psalmist), which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men !’ The brightness of God’s glory cannot be described ; as a full discovery of it would quite overpower the faculties of any mortal in this imperfect state : for man is weak and unworthy of it, weak and could not bear it, guilty and could not but dread it : and therefore God ‘ holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it,’ Job xxvi. 9. With what propriety, then did he say to Moses, ‘ Thou canst not see my face ; for there shall no man see me, and live !’ Exod. xxxiii. 20.

That God is infinite, is evident from the natural notions and dictates of the human mind. Hence the heathens, by the light of nature, attributed this perfection to the Divine Being. Thus one philosopher pronounced him to be a circle whose centre is every where, and whose circumference is no where ; which another philosopher thus expressed in clearer terms, God is included in no place, and excluded from none. Which way soever ye turn, says Seneca, ye may take notice of God meeting you ; for nothing is void of him : he himself fills all his works, and is present with the whole creation. Remarkable also is the expression of the prince of Latin poets, *Jovis omnia plena*, ‘ All things are

full of God.' This also appears from several passages of scripture; as Deut. iv. 39. 'The Lord is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath.' 1 Kings viii. 27. 'The heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee,' says Solomon in his prayer to God at the dedication of the temple. See also Psal. cxxxix. 4, &c. Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. Again, if God were not infinite and immense, many gross absurdities would follow from the contrary notion; such as, it is inconsistent with his universal providence over the world, by which all things are preserved. 'In him we live, move and have our being,' Acts xvii. 27. As his providence is over all, his essence must be equally diffusive. It is inconsistent with his supreme perfection. No perfection can be wanting in God: and therefore a limited essence, which is an imperfection, cannot be attributed to him. It is also inconsistent with his immutability: For if he move and recede from one place to another, would he not thereby be mutable? while yet 'with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' Last of all, it would be inconsistent with his omnipotence. That God can do every thing, is a notion settled in the minds of all; and his essence cannot be less or more confined than his power, and his power cannot be thought to extend farther than his essence.

But some may be ready to say, Does not the scripture say, that God sits in heaven and dwells on high, that heaven is his throne; and does not the Lord's prayer teach us to say, *Our Father which art in heaven?* Now, how can this agree with his infinity or immensity? I answer, God is indeed said to sit in heaven and to dwell on high; but he is no where said to dwell only in the heavens. It is the court of his majestic presence, not the prison of his essence. There is a three-fold presence of God: A glorious presence, which is peculiar to heaven: A gracious presence, which the saints enjoy on earth: And an essential presence, which is equally and alike in all places. Others may allege, that it is a disparagement to God, to say that he is essentially present in all places and with all creatures, even on the dunghill of the earth, and in the sordid sink of hell with the devils and the damned. To this I would only say, that it is a gross misapprehension of God, and an unaccountable measuring of him by ourselves, to imagine that he is capable of being infected by any thing below. For he is a pure and spotless being. Whatever is

nauseous to our senses cannot affect him. Darkness is uncomfortable to us: but the darkness and the light are all one to him. Wickedness may hurt a man; but if we multiply our transgressions, what can we do unto him? Job xxxv. 6, 8. To deny the immensity of God, says one, because of ill-scented places, is to measure God rather by the nicety of sense, than by the sagacity of reason.

Secondly, The next incommunicable attribute of God is eternity. Hence he is called 'the King eternal,' 1 Tim. i. 17. We find other things called eternal. But the eternity of all things besides God is only their having no end, though they had a beginning. Thus angels and the souls of men are eternal, because they shall never have an end. The covenant of grace is eternal, because the mercies of it shall last for ever. The gospel is eternal, because the effects of it shall never wear away. The redemption by Christ is eternal, for the same reason. And the last judgment is so, because the consequences will be everlasting. But the eternity of God is his being without beginning and without end, Psal. xc. 2. 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.' He was from everlasting before time, and will remain unto everlasting when time shall be no more; without beginning of life, or end of days.

Thirdly, The next incommunicable attribute of God is unchangeableness. God is immutable, that is, always the same, without any alteration. Hence it is said, Jam. i. 17. 'With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' Mal. iii. 6. 'I am the Lord, I change not.' God makes changes upon the creatures, but is liable to no change himself.' Though he alters his dispensations, yet not his nature; but, by one pure and constant act of his will and power, effects what changes he pleases. He is the same in all his perfections, constant to his intentions, steady to his purpose, unchangeably fixed and persevering in all his decrees and resolutions. When God is said to repent in scripture, Gen. vi. 6. 1 Sam. xv. 11. it denotes only a change of his outward conduct according to his infallible foresight and immutable will. He changes the way of his providential dealings according to the carriage and deportment of his creature, without changing his will, which is the rule of his providence. For otherwise that is an eternal truth, Num. xxiii. 19. 'God is not a man, that he

should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent,' 1 Sam. xv. 29. 'The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent.'

Having taken a short view of the incommunicable attributes of God, I proceed now to consider those that are called communicable, viz. his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Now these things are in the creatures indeed, but they are in them in a finite way; but God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in these perfections, which no creature is or can be.

First, There is his being which is his nature or essence and existence, which are but one thing in God. Creatures indeed have a being, but it is only a finite being, a being that has a beginning, a changeable one, and that may have an end. But God's being is an infinite being, eternal and unchangeable. Hence he calls himself, Exod. iii. 14. **I AM THAT I AM.** Hence we may infer,

1. That God is incomprehensible, and his essence infinite and unbounded, Psal. cxlv. 3. 'His greatness is unsearchable.' It is not possible for a finite understanding to comprehend all that is in God; but the nature of God is a boundless ocean that hath no shore, Job xi. 7. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?' And though God perfectly knows himself, that is because his understanding is infinite.

2. God is omnipresent and immense. He is present every where, but bounded no where, not only in respect of his virtue or influence, but of his essence. This clearly appears from the following passages, Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9, 10. 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.' Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. 'Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord, 1 Kings viii. 27. 'Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee.' He is there where the thief is stealing, the unclean person grati-

fyng his base lusts, &c. though they see him not, and think themselves secure when no other eyes see them.

3. There is no succession in the duration of God; for where there is not a first, there cannot be a second moment of duration; but God is eternal: And there can be no succession of time in God's duration, if he be unchangeable; for that is a continual change. See 2 Pet. iii. 8. 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'

4. God is independent, or self-sufficient. His being and perfections are underived, and not communicated to him, as all finite perfections are by him to the creature. This self-existence, or independence, is one of the highest glories of the divine nature, by which he is distinguished from all creatures, who live, move, and have their being in and from him. Therefore all our springs are in him, -all that we enjoy or hope for is from him; and we should be entirely devoted to his service and honour.

5. *Lastly*, This doctrine affords full breasts of consolation to the godly, who have an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable friend, who will never leave nor forsake them, but render them completely blessed at last, and confirm them in that happy state for ever. And here is unspeakable terror to those whose enemy this great and eternal God is; for being his enemies, and dying in their rebellion, they shall suffer the whole vengeance and wrath threatened in his word, which he liveth for ever to inflict; and he will never alter what he hath threatened. O let sinners be now persuaded to make this infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God, their friend through Jesus Christ, and so they shall infallibly escape the wrath that is to come.

Secondly, The next communicable attribute of God is wisdom. The personal wisdom of God is Christ, 1 Cor. i. 24. But this is his essential wisdom, which is that attribute of God whereby he knows himself, and all possible things, and how to dispose all things to the best ends. Hence he is said to 'know all things,' John xxi. 17. and to be 'God only wise,' Rom. xvi. 27. Now, God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his wisdom, Psal. cxlvii. 5. 'His understanding is unsearchable.'

The wisdom of God appears,

1. In the works of creation. The universe is a bright

mirror wherein the wisdom of God may be clearly seen. 'The Lord by wisdom made the heavens,' Psal. cxxxvi. 5. 'The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens,' Prov. iii. 19. 'He hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.' More particularly, the wisdom of God appears, (1.) In the vast variety of creatures which he hath made. Hence the Psalmist cries out, 'How manifold are thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast thou made them all,' Psal. civ. 24. (2.) In the admirable and beautiful order and situation of the creatures. God hath marshalled every thing in its proper place and sphere. For instance, the sun, by its position displays the infinite wisdom of its Creator. It is placed in the midst of the planets, to enlighten them with its brightness, and inflame them with its heat, and thereby derive to them such benign qualities as make them beneficial to all mixed bodies. If it were raised as high as the stars, the earth would lose its prolific virtue, and remain a dead carcase for want of its quickening heat; and if it were placed as low as the moon, the air would be inflamed with its excessive heat, the waters would be dried up, and every plant scorched. But at the due distance at which it is placed, it purifies the air, abates the superfluities of the waters, temperately warms the earth, and so serves all the purposes of life and vegetation. It could not be in another position without the disorder and hurt of universal nature. Again, the expansion of the air from the ethereal heavens to the earth is another testimony of divine wisdom: for it is transparent and of a subtile nature, and so a fit medium to convey light and celestial influences to this lower world. Moreover, the situation of the earth doth also trumpet forth the infinite wisdom of its Divine Maker: for it is as it were the pavement of the world, and placed lowermost, as being the heaviest body, and fit to receive the weightiest matter. (3.) In fitting every thing for its proper end and use, so that nothing is unprofitable and useless. After the most diligent and accurate inquiry into the works of God, there is nothing to be found superfluous, and there is nothing defective. (4.) In the subordination of all its parts, to one common end. Though they are of different natures, as lines vastly distant in themselves, yet they all meet in

one common centre, namely, the good and preservation of the whole, Hos. ii. 21, 22. 'I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.'

2. In the government of the world. God sits in his secret place, surrounded with clouds and darkness, holding the rudder of the world in his hand, and steering its course through all the floatings and tossings of casualty and contingency to his own appointed ends. There he grasps and turns the great engine of nature, fastening one pin and loosing another, moving and removing the several wheels of it, and framing the whole according to the eternal idea of his own understanding. By his governing providence he directs all the actions of his creatures; and, by the secret and efficacious penetration of the divine influence, he powerfully sways and determines them which way he pleases.

3. In the work of redemption. This is the very masterpiece of Divine wisdom; and here shines the manifold or diversified wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10. It appears, (1.) In the contrivance thereof. When man had ruined himself by sin, all the wisdom of men and angels could never have devised a method for his recovery. Heaven seemed to be divided upon this awful event. Mercy inclined to save man, but Justice interposed for satisfaction. Justice pleaded the law and the curse, by which the souls of sinners are forfeited to vengeance. Mercy, on the other hand, urged, Shall the Almighty build a glorious work, and suffer it to lie in eternal ruins? shall the most excellent creature in the inferior world perish through the subtilty of a malicious and rebellious spirit? shall that arch-rebel triumph for ever, and raise his trophies from the final ruin of the works of the Most High? Shall the reasonable creature lose the fruition of God, and God lose the subjection and service of his creature? and, shall all mankind be made in vain? Mercy further pleaded, That if the rigorous demands of Justice be heard, it must lie an obscure and unregarded attribute in the divine essence for ever; that it alone must be excluded, while all the rest of the attributes had their share of honour. Thus the case was infinitely difficult, and not to be unravelled by the united wit of all the celestial spirits. A

bench of angels was incapable to contrive a method of reconciling infinite mercy with inflexible justice, of satisfying the demands of the one, and granting the requests of the other. In this hard exigence the wisdom of God interposed, and in the vast treasure of its incomprehensible light, found out an admirable expedient to save man without prejudice to the other divine perfections. The pleas of Justice, said the wisdom of God, shall be satisfied in punishing, and the requests of Mercy shall be granted in pardoning. Justice shall not complain for want of punishment, nor Mercy for want of compassion; I will have an infinite sacrifice to content Justice, and the virtue and fruit of that sacrifice shall delight mercy. Here justice shall have punishment to accept, and Mercy shall have pardon to bestow. My Son shall die, and satisfy justice by his death; and by the virtue and merit of that sacrifice sinners shall be received into favour, and herein Mercy shall triumph and be glorified. Here was the most glorious display of wisdom. (2.) In the ordination of a Mediator every way fitly qualified to reconcile men unto God. A mediator must be capable of the sentiments and affections of both the parties he is to reconcile, and a just esteemer of the rights and injuries of the one and the other, and have a common interest in both. The Son of God, by his incarnation, perfectly possesses all these qualities. He hath a nature to please God, and a nature to please sinners. He had both the perfections of the Deity, and all the qualities and sinless infirmities of the humanity. The one fitted him for things pertaining to God, and the other furnished him with a sense of the infirmities of man.—This union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ was necessary to fit and qualify him for the discharge of his threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.—As a Prophet, it was requisite he should be God, that so he might acquaint us with his Father's will, and reveal the secret purposes and hidden counsels of heaven concerning our salvation, which were locked up in the bosom of God from all eternity. And it was needful he should be man, that he might converse with poor sinners in a familiar manner, and convey the mind and counsels of God to them, in such a way as they could receive them.—As a Priest, he behoved to be a man, that so he might be capable to suffer, and to bear the wrath which

the sins of the elect had justly deserved. And it behoved him to be God, to render his temporary sufferings satisfactory. The great dignity and excellency of the divine Mediator's person made his sufferings of infinite value in God's account. Though he only suffered as a man, yet he satisfied as God.—As a King, he must be God, to conquer Satan, convert an elect world, and effectually subdue the lusts and corruptions of men. And he must be man, that by the excellency of his example, he might lead us in the way of life. (3.) In the manner whereby this redemption is accomplished, namely, by the humiliation of the Son of God. By this he counteracted the sin of angels and men. Pride is the poison of every sin : for in every transgression the creature prefers his pleasure to and sets up his own will above God's. This was the special sin of Adam. The devil would have levelled heaven by an unpardonable usurpation. He said in his heart, *I will be like the Most High* ; and man infected with his breath (when he said, *Ye shall be like gods*) became sick of the same disease. Now, the Divine Redeemer, that he might cure our disease in its source and cause by the quality of the remedy, applied to our pride an unspeakable humility. Man was guilty of the highest robbery in affecting to be equal with God ; and the Son, who was in the bosom of God, and equal to him in majesty and authority, emptied himself by assuming the human nature in its servile state, Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. It is said, John i. 14. 'The word was made flesh.' The meanest part of our nature is specified to signify the greatness of his abasement. There is such an infinite distance between God and flesh, that the condescension is as admirable as the contrivance. So great was the malignity of human pride, that such a profound humility was requisite for the cure of it. And by this Christ destroyed the works of the devil. (4.) In appointing such contemptible, and in appearance opposite means, to bring about such glorious effects. The way is as admirable as the work. Christ ruined the devil's empire by the very same nature that he had vanquished, and by the very means which he had made use of to establish and confirm it. He took not upon him the nature of angels, which is equal to Satan in strength and power ; but he took part of flesh and blood, that he might the more signally triumph over that proud spirit in the human nature, which was in-

ferior to his, and had been vanquished by him in paradise. For this end he did not immediately exercise omnipotent power to destroy him, but managed our weakness to foil the roaring lion. He did not enter the lists with Satan in the glory of his Deity, but disguised under the human nature which was subject to mortality. And thus the devil was overcome in the same nature over which he first got the victory. For as the whole race of mankind was captivated by him in Adam the representative, so believers are made victorious over him by the conquest which their representative obtained in the whole course of his sufferings. As our ruin was effected by the subtilty of Satan, so our recovery is wrought by the wisdom of God, who takes the wise in their own craftiness. Thus eternal life springs from death, glory from ignominy, and blessedness from a curse. We are healed by stripes, quickened by death, purchased by blood, crowned by a cross, advanced to the highest honour by the lowest humility, comforted by sorrows, glorified by disgrace, absolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty. Thus the wisdom of God shines with a radiant brightness in the work of redemption.

I shall conclude this point with a few inferences.

1. God is omniscient; 'he knows all things,' John xxi. 17. 'All things are naked and open to him,' Heb. iv. 13. His eye sees us wherever we are. Even future contingencies, as well as the most necessary things are known to him. This is beautifully described by the Psalmist, Psal. cxxxix. 1, —10. which deserves your serious perusal.

2. His knowledge of all things is not conjectural, but infallible, Rom. xi. 33, 34. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?' There is nothing to him contingent or uncertain; but every thing falls out exactly according to his foreknowledge and predetermination.

3. It is altogether independent on the creature, whose motions and operations were known to him from eternity, and are all regulated by his counsel.

4. *Lastly*, To this wise God we may safely entrust all our concerns, knowing he will manage them all so as to promote his own glory and our real good.

Thirdly, The next communicable perfection of God is power, whereby he can do whatever he pleases, and whatsoever is not repugnant to his nature, Jer. xxxii. 17. 'Ah, Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven, and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.' He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in power; which the scripture holds forth, 1. Positively, Gen. xvii. 1. 'I am the Almighty God.' 2. Negatively, Luke i. 37. 'With God nothing shall be impossible.' 3. Comparatively, Mat. xix. 26. 'With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.'

The power of God appears,

1. In the creation of the world, Rom. i. 20. 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' O how great must that power be, which produced the beautiful fabric of the universe, without the concurrence of any material cause! This proclaims it to be truly infinite: for nothing less could make such distant extremes as nothing and being to meet together. All this was done by a word, one simple act of his will; for 'he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast,' Psal. xxxiii, 9.

2: In the preservation of the world, and all things therein. He 'upholdeth all things by the word of his power,' Heb. i. 3. He preserves all the creatures in their proper place, for their proper use and end. It is by the Divine Power that the heavenly bodies have constantly rolled about in their spheres for so many ages, without wearing or moving out of their proper course; and that the tumultuous elements have persisted in their order to this very day. He preserves the confederacies of nature, sets bounds to the raging sea, and keeps it within its limits by a girdle of sand. He is the powerful preserver of man and beast. He preserves them in their kind and species, by the constant succession of them one after another; so that, though the individuals perish, yet the species continues. O what a mighty power must that be that sustains so many creatures, sets bounds to the raging sea, holds the wind in his fists, and preserves a comely order and sweet harmony among all the creatures!

3. In the government of the world. He is the supreme Rector of the universe, and manages all things, so that they

contribute to the advancement of his own glory, and the advantage of his people. By his governing providence he directs all the actions and motions of his creatures, and powerfully determines them which way soever he pleases. All the creatures are called his host, because he marshals them as an army to serve his important purposes. The whole system of nature is ready to favour and act for men when he commands it, and it is ready to punish them when he gives it a commission. Thus he checked the Red Sea, and it obeyed his voice, Psal. cvi. 9. Its rapid motion quickly ceased, and the fluid waters were immediately ranged as defensive walls to secure the march of his people. At the command of God, the sea again recovered its wonted violence, and the watery walls came tumbling down upon the heads of the proud Egyptian oppressor and his host. The sea so exactly obeyed its orders, that not one Israelite was drowned, and not one Egyptian was saved alive. More particularly, the power of God appears in the moral government of the world.

(1.) In governing and ordering the hearts of men, so that they are not masters of their own affections, but often act quite contrary to what they had firmly resolved and purposed. Of which we have eminent instances in Esau and Balaam. He hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them what way he pleases. Thus he bent the hearts of the Egyptians to favour the Israelites, by sending them away with great riches given them by way of loan. He turned Jehoshaphat's enemies from him when they came with a purpose to destroy him, 2 Chron. xviii. 31.

2. In governing and managing the most stubborn creatures, as devils and wicked men. (1.) In his governing devils. They have great power, and are full of malice. The devil is always going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We could have no quiet nor safety in the world, if his power were not restrained, and his malice curbed by one that is mightier than the infernal fiend. He would turn all things topsy-turvy, plague the world, burn cities and houses, and plunder us of all the supports of life, if he were not held in a chain by the Omnipotent Governor of the world. But God overmasters his strength, so that he cannot move one hair's breadth beyond his tether. God has all the devils chained, and he governs all their motions. The devil could

not touch Job in his person and goods without the divine permission ; nor could he enter into the Gadarene swine without a special licence. If we consider the great malice of these invisible enemies, and the vast extent of their power, we will easily see that there could be no safety or security for men, if they were not curbed and restrained by a superior power.

(2.) In governing wicked men. All the imaginations of their hearts are evil, and only evil continually. They are fully bent upon mischief, and drink iniquity like water. What unbridled licentiousness and headstrong fury would triumph in the world, and run with a rapid violence, if the Divine Power did not interpose to bear down the flood gates of it? Human society would be rooted up, the whole world drenched in blood, and all things would run into a sea of confusion, if God did not bridle and restrain the lusts and corruptions of men. The king of Assyria triumphed much in his design against Jerusalem; but how did God govern and manage that wild ass ! Isa. xxxvii. 29. ‘ I will put my hook into thy nose, (says Jehovah), and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.’ And we are told, Psal. lxxvi. 10. that ‘ the very wrath of man shall praise him, and that he will restrain the remainder of wrath.’

(3.) In raising up a church to himself in spite of all his enemies. This is specially seen in founding the New Testament church, and propagating the gospel through the world. The power of God appears admirable in planting the gospel, and converting the world to Christianity. For there were many and great difficulties in the way, as gross and execrable idolatry; and the nations were strongly confirmed and rooted in their idolatry, being trained up and inured to it from their infant state. It was as hard to make the Gentiles forsake the religion which they received from their birth, as to make the Africans change their skin, and the leopard his spots. The Pagan religion was derived from their progenitors through a long succession of ages. Hence the heathens accused the Christian religion of novelty, and urged nothing more plausibly than the argument of immemorial prescription for their superstition. They would not consider whether it was just and reasonable, but with a blind deference yielded up themselves to the authority of the ancients. The pomp of the Pagan worship was very pleasing to the flesh; the magnificence of their temples, adorned with the trophies of supersti-

tion, their mysterious ceremonies, their music, their processions, their images and altars, their sacrifices and purifications, and the rest of the equipage of a carnal religion, drew their respects and strongly affected their minds through their senses. Whereas the religion of the gospel is spiritual and serious, holy and pure, and hath nothing to move the carnal part. There was then an universal depravation of manners among men; the whole earth was covered with abominations: the most unnatural lusts had lost the fear and shame that naturally attends them. We may see a melancholy picture of their most abandoned conversation, Rom. i. The powers of the world were bent against the gospel. The heathen philosophers strongly opposed it. When Paul preached at Athens, the Epicureans and Stoics entertained him with scorn and derision; 'What will this babbler say?' said they. The heathen priests conspired to obstruct it. The princes of the world thought themselves obliged to prevent the introduction of a new religion, lest their empire should be in hazard, or the greatness and majesty of it impaired thereby. If we consider the means by which the gospel was propagated, the Divine Power will evidently appear. The persons employed in this great work were a few illiterate fishermen, with a publican and a tent-maker, without authority and power to force men to obedience, and without the charms of eloquence to enforce the belief of the doctrines which they taught. Yet this doctrine prevailed, and the gospel had wonderful success through all the parts of the then known world, and that against all the power and policy of men and devils. Now, how could this possibly be, without a mighty operation of the power of God upon the hearts of men?

(4.) In preserving, defending, and supporting his church under the most terrible tempests of trouble and persecution which were raised against her. This is promised by our blessed Saviour, Matth. xvi. 18. 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The most flourishing monarchies have decayed and wasted, and the strongest kingdoms have been broken in pieces; yet the church hath been preserved to this very day, notwithstanding all the subtle and potent enemies which in all ages have been pushing at her. Yea, God has preserved and delivered his church in the greatest extremities, when the danger in all human appearance was unavoidable; as in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in Esther's days, when a

bloody decree was issued to slay all the Jews. Yea, God hath sometimes delivered his church by very weak and contemptible-like instruments, such as Moses, a fugitive from Egypt, and Aaron, a poor captive in it; and sometimes by very unlikely means, as when he smote Egypt with armies of locusts and lice. In all ages of the world God has gloriously displayed his power in the preservation of his church and people, notwithstanding all the rage, power, and malice of their enemies.

(5.) In the conversion of the elect. Hence the gospel, which is the means and instrument of conversion, is called *the power of God*, and *the rod of his strength*; and the day of the success of the gospel in turning sinners to Christ, is called *the day of his power*, Psal. cx. 2. O what a mighty power must that be that stills the waves of a tempestuous sea, quells the lusts and stubbornness of the heart, demolishes the strong holds of sin in the soul, routs all the armies of corrupt nature, and makes the obstinate rebellious will strike sail to Christ! The power of God that is exerted here makes a man to think on other objects, and speak in another strain, than he did before. O how admirable is it, that carnal reason should be thus silenced; that legions of devils should be thus driven out; and that men should part with those sins which before they esteemed their chiefest ornaments, and stand at defiance with all the charming allurements and bitter discouragements of the world? The same power that raised Christ from the grave is exerted in the conversion of a sinner. Eph. i. 19, 20. There is greater power exerted in this case than there was in the creation of the world. For when God made the world, he met with no opposition; he spake the word, and it was done: but when he comes to convert a sinner, he meets with all the opposition which the devil and a corrupt heart can make against him. God wrought but one miracle in the creation: he spake the word and it was done; but there are many miracles wrought in conversion. The blind is made to see, the dead raised, and the deaf hears the voice of the son of God. O the infinite power of Jehovah! In this work the mighty arm of the Lord is revealed.

(6.) In preserving the souls of believers amidst the many dangers to which they are exposed, and bringing them safely to glory at last. They have many enemies without, a legion of subtle and powerful devils, and a wicked and ensnaring

world, with all its allurements and temptations; and they have many strong lusts and corruptions within; and their graces are but weak, and in their infancy and minority, while they are here: So that it may justly be matter of wonder how they are preserved. But the apostle tells us, that they 'are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,' 1 Pet. i. 5. Indwelling corruption would soon quench grace in their hearts, if it were not kept alive by a divine power. But Christ hath pledged his faithfulness for it, that they shall be kept secure, John x. 28. It is his power that moderates the violence of temptations, supports his people under them, defeats the power of Satan, and bruises him under their feet.

4. *Lastly*, The power of God appears gloriously in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ. Hence in scripture Christ is called *the power* as well as *the wisdom of God*. This is the most admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world. More particularly,

(1.) The power of God shines in Christ's miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin. The power of the Highest did overshadow her, Luke i. 35. and by a creative act framed the humanity of Christ of the substance of the virgin's body, and united it to the Divinity. This was foretold many ages before as the effect of the divine power. When Judah was oppressed by two potent kings, and despaired of any escape and deliverance to raise their drooping spirits, the prophet tells them, that he would give them a sign; and a wonderful one it was. Therefore it is said 'Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,' Isa. vii. 14. The argument is from the greater to the less; For if God will accomplish that stupendous and unheard-of wonder, much more will he rescue his people from the fury of their adversaries.

(2.) In uniting the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, and that without any confusion of the two natures, or changing the one into the other. The two natures of Christ are not mixed together, as liquors that incorporate with one another, when poured into the same vessel. The divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into the divine. One nature doth not swallow up another, and make a third distinct from both. But they are distinct, and yet united; conjoined, and yet unmixed: the properties of each nature are preserved entire. O, what a wonder of

power was here! that two natures, a divine and a human, infinitely distant in themselves, should meet together in a personal conjunction! Here one equal with God is found in the form of a servant; here God and man are united in one; the Creator and the creature are miraculously allied in the same subsistence. Here a God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows. That is an admirable expression, 'The Word was made flesh,' John i. 14. What can be more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God? that a person possessed of all the perfections and excellencies of the Deity should inherit all the infirmities and imperfections of humanity, sin only excepted? Was there not need of infinite power, to bring together terms which were so far asunder? Nothing less than an omnipotent power could effect and bring about what an infinite and incomprehensible wisdom did project in this matter.

(3.) In supporting the human nature of Christ, and keeping it from sinking under the terrible weight of divine wrath that came upon him for our sins, and making him victorious over the devil and all the powers of darkness. His human nature could not possibly have borne up under the wrath of God and the curse of the law, nor held out under such fearful contests with the powers of hell and the world, if it had not been upheld by infinite power. Hence his Father says concerning him, Isa. xlii. 1. 'Behold my servant whom I uphold.'

(4.) The divine power did evidently appear in raising Christ from the dead. The apostle tells us, that God exerted his mighty power in Christ when he raised him from the dead, Eph. i. 19. The unlocking the belly of the whale for the deliverance of Jonah, the rescue of Daniel from the den of lions, and restraining the fire from burning the three children, were signal declarations of the divine power, and types of the resurrection of our Redeemer. But all these are nothing to what is represented by them: for that was a power over natural causes, and curbing of beasts and restraining of elements; but in the resurrection of Christ, God exercised a power over himself, and quenched the flames of his own wrath, that was hotter than millions of Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces: he unlocked the prison doors wherein the curses of the law had lodged our Saviour, stronger than the belly

and ribs of a leviathan. How admirable was it, that he should be raised from under the curse of the law, and the infinite weight of our sins, and brought forth with success and glory after his sharp encounter with the powers of hell! in this the power of God was gloriously manifested. Hence he is said to be raised from the dead 'by the glory of the Father,' *i. e.* by his glorious power; and 'declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead,' Rom. i. 4. All the miraculous proofs by which God acknowledged him for his Son during his life, had been ineffectual without this. If he had remained in the grave, it had been reasonable to believe him only an ordinary person, and that his death had been the just punishment of his presumption in calling himself the Son of God. But his resurrection from the dead was the most illustrious and convincing evidence, that really he was what he declared himself to be.

I shall conclude, on this point, with a few inferences.

1. God is omnipotent; that is, can do all things. It is true he cannot lie nor deny himself, for these are repugnant to his nature, and argue not power, but weakness and imperfection.

2. God's power never acts to its utmost extent. He can do more always than he either doth or will do, Matt. iii. 9. He can do all things possible; but he only doth what he hath decreed to be done, Mat. xxvi. 53, 54.

3. Hence we may be confirmed in our belief of the resurrection. Some are ready to reckon it a thing impossible, that there can be a recollection of the dispersed particles of mens bodies when they are dissolved into dust, and scattered into the four winds. But if we consider the power of God, this will abundantly answer all that can be objected against this truth. Hence saith the apostle, Acts xxvi. 8. 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?' And saith our Saviour to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, 'Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.' Almighty power can meet with no let or bar. Unless the particles of men's bodies could be scattered beyond the reach of Almighty power, and grinded so small as to escape the knowledge and care of God, this dispersion can make nothing against the faith and possibility of the resurrection.

4. Is God of infinite power? then all his promises shall

be most certainly accomplished, whatever difficulties may be in the way thereof. For God is able to bring to pass whatever he has promised to his people. Therefore difficulty or improbability should never discourage or weaken our faith, because the power of God is infinite.

5. They are absolutely sure of salvation who are kept by the power of God; for God is able to keep them from falling, and his power is engaged for their preservation. They are surrounded with and infolded in the arms of Omnipotence; their souls are in safe custody, being committed unto Christ, from whose hands none can pluck them.

6. Wo to those against whom the power of God is set; for 'they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Consider this, O ye sinners, and flee from the wrath that is to come.

7. Abuse not the power of God, by limiting it, as Israel did in the wilderness, Psal. lxxviii. 19. by trusting to an arm of flesh, as too many are apt to do, more than to the God of power, Jer. xvii. 5. or by fearing the wrath of man, who can only kill the body, and not dreading the displeasure of Almighty God, Isa. li. 12, 13.

8. *Lastly*, Improve the power of God by faith, depending upon it for the performance of all his gracious promises towards you and the church; for 'he can work, and who shall let it?' for strength to resist and vanquish sin, Satan, and the world, saying, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' and for grace to enable you to the performance of every commanded duty, saying with the apostle, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'

Fourthly, The next communicable attribute of God that falls to be considered is holiness, which is the absolute purity of his nature, whereby he delights in whatever is agreeable to his holy will, and in the resemblance of it that is in the creatures. Or, it is the perfect rectitude and integrity of the divine essence, whereby in all that he doth he acts like himself and for himself, delighting in whatever is agreeable to his will and nature, and abhorring whatever is contrary thereto. Hence he is said to be 'glorious in holiness,' Exod. xv. 11. And 'he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity,' Hab. i. 13. And

he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in holiness. Hence the heavenly host proclaim, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,' Isa. vi. 3.

Now, God is, (1.) Necessarily holy. Not only he will not, but he cannot look on iniquity. His holiness is not only an act of his will, but belongeth to his essence. (2.) He is essentially holy. Holiness is the essential glory of the divine nature; yea, it is his very essence. Holiness in men is an accessory quality and superadded gift, and is separable from the creature. But in God his essence and his holiness are the same. He could as soon cease to be God, as cease to be holy. (3.) He is perfectly holy. The best saints on earth are but holy in part; there is still a mixture of sin in them while here. But, 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,' 1 John i. 5. (4.) He is universally holy; holy in all that he is, in all that he hath, and in all that he doth. He is holy in his name, in his nature, in his word, and in his works. (5.) He is originally holy. Angels and men are made holy; but God is holy of himself, and he is the original spring of all the holiness that is in the creatures. (6.) He is exemplarily holy. The holiness of God is the example and pattern of all the holiness that is in the creatures. Hence we are required to 'be holy as God is holy,' 1 Pet. i. 16. (7.) He is perpetually and unchangeably holy. The best men on earth may change to the worse; they may grow less holy than they are; but God is immutable in his holiness. He cannot grow more holy than he is, because he is infinitely holy, and his holiness is incapable of any addition. Nor can he grow less holy than he is, because then he would cease to be God.

The holiness of God is manifested and discovered,

1. In his word; and that both in the precepts and promises thereof, God manifested his hatred and detestation of sin even in a variety of sacrifices under the ceremonial law; and the occasional washings and sprinklings upon ceremonial defilements, which polluted only the body, were a clear proof, that every thing that had a resemblance to evil was loathsome to God. All the legal sacrifices, washings, and purifications, were designed to express what an evil sin is, and how hateful and abominable it is to him. But the holiness of God is most remarkably expressed in the moral law. Hence *the law* is said to be *holy*, Rom. vii. 12. It is a true transcript of the

holiness of God. And it is holy in its precepts. 'It requires an exact, perfect, and complete holiness in the whole man, in every faculty of the soul, and in every member of the body. It is holy in its prohibitions. It forbids and condemns all impurity and filthiness whatsoever. It discharges not only sinful words and actions, gross and atrocious crimes, and profane, blasphemous, and unprofitable speeches, but all sinful thoughts and irregular motions of the heart. Hence is that exhortation, Jer. iv. 14. 'O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?' It is holy in its threatenings. All these have their fundamental root in the holiness of God, and are a branch of this essential perfection. All the terrible threatenings annexed to the law are declarations of the holiness and purity of God, and of his infinite hatred and detestation of sin.

Again, the holiness of God appears in the promises of the word. They are called *holy promises*, Psal. cv. 42. and they are designed to promote and encourage true holiness. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1. 'Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.' By them we are 'made partakers of a divine nature,' 2 Pet. i. 4.

2. The holiness of God is manifested in his works. Hence the Psalmist saith, 'The Lord is holy in all his works,' Psal. cxlv. 17. More particularly,

(1.) The divine holiness appears in the creation of man. Solomon tells us, Eccl. vii. 29. that 'God made man upright;' and Moses says, that he was 'made after the image of God,' Gen. i. 27. Now, the image of God in man consists chiefly in holiness. Therefore the *new man* is said to be 'created after God in righteousness and true holiness,' Eph. iv. 24. Adam was made with a perfection of grace. There was an entire and universal rectitude in all its faculties, disposing them to their proper operations. There was no disorder among his affections, but a perfect agreement between the flesh and the spirit; and they both joined in the service of God. He fully obeyed the first and great command, of loving the lord with all his soul and strength, and his love to other things was regulated by his love to God. When Adam dropt from the creating finger of God, he had knowledge in his understanding, sanctity in his will, and rectitude

in his affections. There was such a harmony among all his faculties, that his members yielded to his affections, his affections to his will, his will obeyed his reason, and his reason was subject to the law of God. Here then was a display of the divine purity.

(2.) In the works of Providence; Particularly in his judicial proceedings against sinners for the violation of his holy and righteous laws. All the fearful judgments which have been poured down upon sinners, spring from God's holiness and hatred of sin. All the dreadful storms and tempests in the world are blown up by it. All diseases and sicknesses, wars, pestilence, plagues, and famines, are designed to vindicate God's holiness and hatred of sin. And therefore, when God had smitten the two sons of Aaron for offering strange fire, he says, 'I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh me, and before all the congregation I will be glorified,' Lev. x. 3. He glorified himself in declaring by that act, before all the people, that he is a holy God, that cannot endure sin and disobedience. More particularly,

[1.] God's holiness and hatred of sin is clearly manifested in his punishing the angels that sinned. It is said, 2 Pet. ii. 4. 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.' Neither their mighty numbers, nor the nobility of their natures, could incline their offended Sovereign to spare them; they were immediately turned out of heaven, and expelled from the divine presence. Their case is hopeless and helpless; no mercy will ever be shewn to one of them, being under the blackness of darkness for ever.

[2.] In the punishment threatened and inflicted on man for his first apostasy from God. Man in his first state was the friend and favourite of heaven; by his extraction and descent he was the Son of God, a little lower than the angels; consecrated and crowned for the service of his Maker, and appointed as king over the inferior world; he was placed in paradise, the garden of God, and admitted to fellowship and communion with him. But sin hath divested him of all his dignity and glory. By his rebellion against his Creator, he made a forfeiture of his dominion, and so lost the obedience of the sensible creatures, and the service of the insensible. He was thrust out of paradise, banished from the presence of

God, and debarred from fellowship and communion with him. God immediately sentenced him and all his posterity to misery, death, and ruin. This is a clear demonstration of the infinite purity and holiness of God. But blessed be God, for Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away.

[3.] In executing terrible and strange judgments upon sinners. It was for sin that God drowned the old world with a deluge of water, rained hell out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and made the earth open her mouth, and swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. It was for sin that God brought terrible destroying judgments upon Jerusalem. All calamities and judgments spring from this bitter root, as sword, pestilence, distempers of body, perplexities of mind, poverty, reproach, and disgrace, and whatever is grievous and afflictive to men. All this shows how hateful sin is to God.

[4.] In punishing sins seemingly small with great and heavy judgments. A multitude of angels were sent down to hell for an aspiring thought, as some think. Uzzah, a good man, was struck dead in a moment for touching the ark; yea, fifty thousand Bethshemites were smitten dead for looking into it. We are apt to entertain slight thoughts of many sins: but God hath set forth some as examples of his hatred and abhorrence of sins seemingly small, for a warning to others, and a testimony and demonstration of his exact holiness.

[5.] In bringing heavy afflictions on his own people for sin. Even the sins of believers in Christ do sometimes cost them very dear. He will not suffer them to pass without correction for their transgressions. Though they are exempted from everlasting torments in hell, yet they are not spared from the furnace of affliction here on earth. We have instances of this in David, Solomon, Jonah, and other saints. Yea, sometimes God in this life, punishes sin more severely in his own people than in other men. Moses was excluded from the land of Canaan but for speaking unadvisedly with his lips, though many greater sinners were suffered to enter in. Such severity towards his own people is a plain demonstration, that God hates sin as sin, and not because the worst men commit it.

[6.] In sentencing so many of Adam's posterity to ever-

lasting torments for sin. That an infinitely good God, who is goodness itself, and delights in mercy, should adjudge so many of his own creatures to the everlasting pains and torments of hell, must proceed from his infinite holiness, on account of something infinitely detested and abhorred by him.

3. The holiness of God appears in our redemption by Jesus Christ. Here his love to holiness and his hatred of sin is most conspicuous. All the demonstrations that ever God gave of his hatred of sin were nothing in comparison of this. Neither all the vials of wrath and judgment which God hath poured out since the world began, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the groans and roarings of the damned in hell, nor that irreversible sentence pronounced against the fallen angels, do afford such a demonstration of the divine holiness, and hatred of sin, as the death and sufferings of the blessed Redeemer. This will appear, if ye consider,

(1.) The great dignity and excellency of his person. He was the eternal and only begotten Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Yet he must descend from the throne of his majesty, divest himself of his robes of insupportable light, take upon him the form of a servant, become a curse, and bleed to death for sin. Did ever sin appear so hateful to God as here? To demonstrate God's infinite holiness, and hatred of sin, he would have the most glorious and most excellent person in heaven and earth to suffer for it. He would have his own Son to die on a disgraceful cross, and be exposed to the terrible flames of divine wrath, rather than sin should live, and his holiness remain for ever disparaged by the violations of his law.

(2.) How dear he was to his Father. He was his only begotten Son, he had not another; the only darling and the chief delight of his soul, who had lain in his bosom from all eternity. Yet as dear as he was to God, he would not and could not spare him, when he stood charged with his people's sins. For saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 32. 'God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,' as he spared him not in a way of free bounty, giving him freely as a ransom for their souls! so he spared him not

in a way of vindictive justice, but exacted the utmost mite of satisfaction from him for their sins.

(3.) The greatness of his sufferings. Indeed the extremity of his sufferings cannot be expressed. Insensible nature, as if it had been capable of understanding and affection, was disordered in its whole frame at his death. The sun forsook his shining, and clothed the whole heavens in black; so that the air was dark at noon-day, as if it had been midnight. The earth shook and trembled, the rocks were rent asunder, and universal nature shrank. Christ suffered all that wrath which was due to the elect for their sins. His sufferings were equivalent to those of the damned. He suffered a punishment of loss: for all the comforting influences of the Spirit were suspended for a time. The divine nature kept back all its joys from the human nature of Christ, in the time of his greatest sufferings. We deserved to have been separated from God for ever; and therefore our Redeemer was deserted for a time. There was a suspension of all joy and comfort from his soul, when he needed it most. This was most afflicting and cutting to him, who had never seen a frown in his Father's face before. It made him cry out with a lamentable accent, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Again, he suffered a punishment of sense, and that with respect to both his body and soul. The elect had forfeited both soul and body to divine vengeance; and therefore Christ suffered in both. The sufferings of his body were indeed terrible. It was filled with exquisite torture and pain. His hands and his feet, the most sensible parts were pierced with nails. His body was distended with such pains and torments as when all the parts are out of joint. Hence it is said of him, Psal. xxii. 14, 15. 'I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels, my strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me unto the dust of death.' Now, thus did the Son of God suffer. His pure and blessed hands, which were never stretched out but to do good, were pierced and rent asunder; and those feet which bore the Redeemer of the world, and for which the very waters had a reverence, were nailed to a tree. His

body, which was the precious workmanship of the Holy Ghost, and the temple of the Deity, was destroyed. But his bodily sufferings were but the body of his sufferings. It was the sufferings of his soul that was the soul of his sufferings. No tongue can tell you what he endured here. When all the comforting influences of the Spirit were suspended, then an impetuous torrent of unmixed sorrows broke into his soul. O what agonies and conflicts, what sharp encounters, and distresses did he meet with from the wrath of God that was poured out upon him! He bore the wrath of an angry God, pure wrath without any allay or mixture, and all that wrath which was due to the elect through all eternity for their innumerable sins. Sin was so hateful to God, that nothing could expiate it, or satisfy for it, but the death and bitter agonies of his dear Son.

(4.) Consider the cause of his sufferings. It was not for any sin of his own, for he had none, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. They were made his only by a voluntary susception, by taking his people's sins upon him. And though they were only imputed to him, yet God would not spare him. So that there is nothing wherein the divine holiness and hatred of sin is so manifest as in the sufferings of his own dear Son. This was a greater demonstration thereof than if all men and angels had suffered for it eternally in hell-fire.

It remains now to shut up this point with a few inferences.

1. Hence see the great evil of sin. It strikes against the divine holiness, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity; so that it is not only contrary to our own interest, but to the very nature of God. All sin aims in general at the being of God, but especially at the holiness of his being. There are some sins that strike more directly against one divine perfection, and some against another; but all sins agree together in their enmity against the holiness of God. Hence, when Sennacherib's sin is aggravated, the Holy Spirit takes the rise from this perfection, 2 Kings xix. 22. 'Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.' God cannot but hate that which is directly opposite to the glory of his nature, and the lustre and varnish of all his other perfections. Now, what

an horrid evil must that be which is so contrary to the holy nature of God, and which is infinitely detested and abhorred by him?

2. Hence see the excellency of true gospel-holiness. Holiness is the glory and beauty of God, and the glory of the heavenly angels; and therefore it must be the glory of men and women, that which makes them truly glorious. In this respect the king's daughter is said to be *all glorious within*. The church is glorious, because she is holy. Hence Christ sanctifies and cleanses it, that he may present it to himself a glorious church, Eph. v. 25, 26. Holiness is the image of God in the rational creature. The more holy one is, the more like is he to God. This is our chief excellency. Man's original glory and happiness consisted in this; and the excellency of angels above devils lies in this. Holiness hath a self-evidencing excellency in it. There is such a beauty and majesty in it, as commands an acknowledgment of it from the consciences of all sorts of knowing men.

3. God can have no gracious communion with unholy sinners: 'For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?' 2 Cor. vi. 14. It is simply impossible that an infinitely holy God should embrace vile polluted sinners, that are not washed from their filthiness. They can have no fellowship with him here or hereafter. God will not give impure sinners one good look; for 'he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity,' Hab. i. 13. All communion is founded on union, and union upon likeness. But what likeness is there between a holy God and vile polluted creatures? Therefore they can never expect to have any communion with him, unless they be made clean. Hence they are directed to this, in order to their communion with God, Jam. iv. 8. 'Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you; cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.' 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'

4. The best of saints, who have attained the highest degrees, and made the greatest improvements in holiness and purity, may be ashamed in the presence of an infinitely holy God;

for they are far short of that holiness which God requires, and all the purity they have attained is sadly tinged with impurity. It had this effect upon the evangelical prophet, when he had a vision of the holy God. Isa. vi. 5. 'Wo is me,' says he, 'for I am undone, because I am of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'

5. Despisers of holiness are despisers of God. For holiness is the glory of God, and that in which he delights above all things. For men, therefore, to despise holiness in the saints, and to make a mock of their holy lives and practices, is a high contempt of the holy God, who will highly resent such a great indignity done him.

6. There is no access to God without a Mediator. 'For our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29. and our sin hath made us as stubble fully dry. He is infinitely pure and holy, and we are vile filthy creatures; so that it is quite impossible for us to have any access to him, or communion with him, on our own account. We have all reason to cry out, as 1 Sam. vi. 20. 'Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?' There is no standing before him without a Mediator. The spots and blemishes of our best duties cannot be hid from the eyes of his holiness. He cannot accept of a righteousness lower than that which bears some suitableness to the holiness of his nature: but even our highest obedience and best righteousness does not in any degree suit the divine holiness: and therefore it cannot challenge any acceptance with God. The righteousness of Christ, being the righteousness of God, a perfect and unspotted righteousness, is that wherein alone the holiness of God can acquiesce, and is the foundation of all access to God, and communion with him.

7. Is God infinitely and necessarily holy, so that he cannot but hate sin? then how admirable is the patience of God towards this land, and the generation wherein we live? How much sin and wickedness abounds amongst us? Alas! all kinds of sin wofully prevail at this day among all ranks and degrees of persons, high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble; all have corrupted their way. Sins of a heinous nature are to be found among us, such as bid God a defiance; horrid blasphemies, hideous oaths vile, adulteries, cruel oppressions, contempt of religion, and gross profanation of the Lord's day. Add to all these,

ingratitude, worldliness, pride, and self-conceit among such as are more eminent for a profession of religion. All these are committed under a clear gospel-light, after signal mercies and deliverances, against the most solemn covenant engagements, personal and national, and against manifold rebukes and warnings from the word and providence of God. And alas! how are these sins increased and multiplied? Who can compute the number of the sins which one profane wretch is guilty of? But what are these to the sins of a whole city? and what are the sins of a whole city to the sins of the whole nation? Who can compute the number of the sins which Scotland is guilty of in one day? But what are these to the sins which have been committed for a great many years past? Ah! we are a people deeply laden with iniquity. O what matter of admiration is here, that God bears so long with us! His holiness and purity renders his patience the more astonishing. O the riches of his forbearance towards us! Admire it and adore it, and praise and bless him for it; and beware of abusing it, by taking liberty to go on in sin, because of it. Such an amazing patience, if abused, will render our judgment very severe.

8. *Lastly*, Be exhorted to make a suitable improvement of the holiness of God, by fleeing to Jesus Christ, whose perfect righteousness alone can make you acceptable to God, and whose Spirit can sanctify and cleanse you; by giving thanks at the remembrance of the divine holiness, by proclaiming the glory thereof; and by studying holiness in all manner of life and conversation.

Fifthly, The next communicable attribute of God that falls under our consideration is his *justice*, which is the perfect rectitude of his nature, whereby he is infinitely righteous and equal, both in himself, and in all his dealings with his creatures, Deut. xxxii. 4. 'Just and right is he.' God is just to himself in acting in all things agreeable to his nature and perfections. All his actions are such as become such a pure and holy being as he is. He cannot do any thing that is contrary to the perfection of his nature: he cannot lie nor deny himself. He is just to himself in maintaining his own glory, and his divine rights and prerogatives; for he will not give his glory to another. And he is just towards his creatures in all his dealings with them, particularly with

man. Here God may be considered, 1. As a sovereign Lord; and, 2. As supreme governor and Judge of the world.

(1.) *As sovereign Lord.* And so he hath a right to do with his own what he will. He may order and dispose of all the creatures according to his pleasure, Dan. iv. 35. We are all in his hand as clay in the hand of the potter. He hath a sovereign and absolute right to use and dispose of us according to his own pleasure, to set bounds to our habitation, carve out our lot in the world, and set us high or low, in prosperity or adversity, as he pleaseth. It is so also, as to his dispensations of grace. He may give grace to whom he will, and withhold it from whom he will; and what he wills in that matter is just and right, because he wills it.

2. *As supreme Governor and Judge of the world.* And so he is just in governing his rational creatures in a way agreeable to their nature, according to a law which he has given them. His justice in this character is either legislative or executive.

(1.) There is a legislative justice, which is that whereby he gives most just and righteous laws to his creatures, commanding and forbidding what is fit for them in right reason to do and forbear. 'For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our king, the Lord is our lawgiver,' Isa. xxxiii. 22. Man being a reasonable creature, capable of moral government, therefore, that God might rule him according to his nature, he hath given him a law, confirmed by promises of reward, to draw him by hope, and by threatenings of punishment to deter him by fear. Hence Moses tells the Israelites, that he had 'set before them life and good, and death and evil,' Deut. xxx. 15. and then he had 'set before them life and death, blessing and cursing,' ver. 19.

(2.) There is God's executive justice, called also by some his judicial justice, by others his distributive justice. In this respect he is just in giving every one his due, and in rendering unto all men according to their works, without respect of persons. This executive justice of God is either remunerative or afflictive.

[1.] There is a remunerative or rewarding justice. God is just in rewarding the righteous, Psal. lvi. 11. 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous.' The saints shall not serve him for nought. Though they may be losers for him,

yet they shall not be losers by him, Heb. vi. 10. 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.' He bountifully rewards his people's obedience, and their diligence and faithfulness in his service. Hence David says, Psal. xviii. 20. 'The Lord rewardeth me according to my righteousness.' Sometimes he rewards them with temporal blessings: for godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come. Sometimes Providence doth notably interpose, and load obedience with blessings here in the world, to the conviction of all beholders, so that men are constrained to say, 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous.' But however he do as to outward things, yet he rewards his people with inward blessings. There are fresh supplies and influences of grace, near and intimate communion with him, sweet manifestations of his favour and love, intimations of peace and pardon, and joy and peace in believing, &c. Even 'in keeping his commandments there is great reward,' Psal. xix. 11. And he rewards them with eternal blessings, 2 Thess. i. 7. Now, this reward is not of debt but of grace. It doth not imply any merit, but is free and gratuitous. It is not because they deserve it, but because Christ has merited it, and God has graciously promised it.

(2.) There is an afflictive justice. God is just in all the afflictions and troubles which he brings upon his creatures; because he always punishes sinners by a law. The violations of his holy and righteous laws make them obnoxious to his judgments. Sometimes God sends afflictions upon people to chastise and correct them for their sins. Now, all the troubles of believers are of this kind: for as many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens. Some of their afflictions are intended to reduce them from their strayings. Hence says David, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray,' and, 'It was good for me that I was afflicted.' Indeed God chuseth some in the furnace of affliction. The hot furnace is God's work-house wherein he sometimes formeth vessels of honour. Manasseh is an eminent instance of this. Many that were never serious before, are brought to consider their ways in their affliction. Sometimes God takes vengeance on wicked men for their sins and disobedience to his laws; and this is called vindictive justice, Rom. iii. 5, 6. which is essential to the nature of God, and is not merely

an effect of his will. He cannot let sin go unpunished. He not only will not, but he cannot acquit the wicked. But more of this afterwards.

The justice of God is manifested and discovered,

1. In the temporal judgments which he brings upon sinners even in this life. The saints own this, Neh. ix. 33. 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us.' The end and design of all God's judgments is to witness to the world, that he is a just and righteous God. All the fearful plagues and terrible judgments which God has brought upon the world, proclaim and manifest his justice.

2. In sentencing so many of Adam's posterity to everlasting pains and torments for sin, according to that dreadful sentence which shall be pronounced at the last day, Matth. xxv. 41. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' If you could descend into the bottomless pit, and view the pains and torments of hell, and hear the terrible shrieks and roarings of the damned wallowing in these sulphureous flames, you could not shun to cry out, O the severity of divine justice! Though they are the works of God's own hand's, and roar and cry under their torments, yet they cannot obtain any mitigation of their pains, nay, not so much as one drop of water to cool their tongues. That an infinitely good and gracious God, that delights in mercy, should thus torment so many of his own creatures, O how incorruptible must his justice be!

3. In the death and sufferings of Christ. God gave his beloved son to the death for this end, that it might be known what a just and righteous God he is. So the apostle shews us, Rom. iii. 25. 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness,' &c. He set him forth in garments rolled in blood, to declare his justice and righteousness to the world. After man turned rebel, and apostatised from God, there was no way to keep up the credit and honour of divine justice, but either a strict execution of the law's sentence, or a full satisfaction. The execution would have destroyed the whole race of Adam. Therefore Christ stepped in, and made a sufficient satisfaction by his death and sufferings, that so God might exercise his mercy without prejudice to his justice. Thus the blood of the Son of God must be shed for sin, to let the world see that he is a just and righteous God. The

justice of God could and would be satisfied with no less. Hence it is said, Rom. viii. 32. 'God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all.' If forbearance might have been expected from any, surely it might from God, who is full of pity and tender mercy: yet God in this case spared him not. If one might have expected sparing mercy and abatement from any, surely Christ might most of all expect it from his own Father; yet God spared not his own Son. Sparing mercy is the lowest degree of mercy; yet it was denied to Christ, when he stood in the room of the elect. God abated him not a minute of the time appointed for his sufferings, nor one degree of the wrath which he was to bear. Nay, though in the garden, when Christ fell on the ground, and put up that lamentable and pitiful cry, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;' yet no abatement was granted to him. The Father of mercies saw his dear Son humbled in his presence, and yet dealt with him in extreme severity. The sword of justice was in a manner asleep before, in all the terrible judgments which had been executed on the world, but now it must be awakened and roused up to pierce the heart of the blessed Redeemer. Hence it is said, Zech. xiii. 7. 'Awake O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd.' If divine justice had descended from heaven in a visible form, and hanged up millions of sinners in chains of wrath, it had not been such a demonstration of the wrath of God, and his hatred of sin, as the death and sufferings of his own Son. When we hear that God exposed his own Son to the utmost severity of wrath and vengeance, may we not justly cry out O the infinite evil of sin! O the inflexible severity of divine justice! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,

4. The justice of God will be clearly manifested at the great day. God hath reared up many trophies already to the honour of his power and justice out of the ruins of his most insolent enemies: but then will be the most solemn triumph of divine justice. The apostle tells us, Acts xvii. 31. that 'he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' On that awful day

the justice and righteousness of God shall be clearly revealed, therefore it is called 'the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,' Rom. ii. 5. The equity of God's dealings and dispensations is not now so fully seen: but all will be open and manifest on that day. Then he will liberally reward the righteous, and severely punish the wicked.

5. God's justice will shine for ever in the torments of the damned in hell. The smoke of their furnace, their yellings and roarings, will proclaim through eternity the inexorable justice and severity of God. It is not enough for the satisfaction of his justice to deprive them of heaven and happiness; but he will inflict the most tormenting punishment upon sense and conscience in hell. For as both soul and body were guilty in this life, the one as the guide, the other as the instrument of sin, so it is but just and equal that they should both feel the penal effects of it hereafter. Sinners shall then be tormented in that wherein they most delighted: they shall then be invested with those objects which will cause the most dolorous perceptions in their sensitive faculties. The lake of fire and brimstone, the blackness of darkness, for ever, are words of a terrible signification. But no words can fully express the terrible ingredients of their misery. Their punishment will be in proportion to the glory of God's majesty that is provoked; and the extent of his power. And as the soul was the principal, and the body but an accessory in the works of sin; so its capacious faculties shall be far more tormented than the limited faculties of the outward senses. The fiery attributes of God shall be transmitted through the glass of conscience, and concentrated upon damned spirits. The fire without will not be so tormenting as the fire within them. Then all the tormenting passions will be inflamed. What rancour, reluctance, and rage, will there be against the just power that sentenced them to hell! what impatience and indignation against themselves for their wilful and inexcusable sins, the just cause of it! how will they curse their creation, and wish their utter extinction as the final remedy of their misery! But all their ardent wishes will be in vain. For the guilt of sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconciled as to annihilate them. As long as there is justice in heaven, or fire in hell, as long as God and eternity shall continue, they must suffer those torments which the strength and pa-

tience of an angel cannot bear one hour. The justice of God will blaze forth for ever in the agonies and torments of the damned.

It may not be improper here to take notice of, and answer some objections that are made against the divine justice.

Object. 1. If God be infinitely just and righteous, how stands it with his justice that insolent contemnners of his majesty and laws should prosper in the world? This was observed by the saints long ago; see Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6, 7, 12.; and has proved a stumbling-block to some of God's own children, and has been apt to make them question his justice; see Job xxi. 7.—14. Jer. xii. 1, 2. But in answer, consider,

1. That the wicked may be sometimes instruments to do God's work. Though they do not design and intend his glory, yet they may be instrumental in promoting it. Thus Cyrus was instrumental for the building of God's temple at Jerusalem. Now there is some kind of justice in it that such persons should have a temporal reward. God is pleased to suffer those to prosper under whose wings his own people are sheltered. He will not be in any man's debt. Nebuchadnezzar did some service for God, and the Lord rewarded him for it, by granting him an enlargement of greatness, Ezek. xxix. 18, 19, 20,

2. God doth not always let the wicked prosper in their sin. There are some whom he punisheth openly, that his justice may be observed by all. Hence the Psalmist saith, 'The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands,' Psal. ix. 16. Sometimes their prosperity is but short lived, and they are suddenly cast down, as the Psalmist remarks, Psal. lxxiii. 18, 19, 20. His justice is seen striking men dead sometimes in the very act of sin; as in the case of Zimri and Cozbi, Pharaoh, Sennacherib, &c.

3. God suffers men to go on in sin and prosper, that he may render them the more inexcusable. This goodness and forbearance should lead them to repentance; and when it does not, it aggravates their sin, and makes them the more inexcusable, when he comes to reckon with them. Hence it is said of Jezebel, 'I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not,' Rev. ii. 21. God spins out his mercies towards sinners; and if they do not repent and amend, his patience will be a witness against them, and his justice will be more cleared in their condemnation.

4. If God let the wicked prosper for a while, the vial of his wrath is all that while filling up, his sword is whetting and though he forbear them for a time, yet long-suffering is not forgiveness. The longer it be ere he give the blow, it will be the heavier when it comes. The last scene of justice is coming, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. There is a day of wrath approaching, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Then he will glorify his justice in taking vengeance on them for all their sins. God hath an eternity in which he will punish the wicked. Divine justice may be as a lion asleep for a time; but at last this lion will awake, and roar upon the sinner. Their long continued prosperity will heighten their eternal condemnation. There are many sinners in hell who lived in great pomp and prosperity in the world, and are now roaring under the terrible lashes of inexorable justice. Thus ye may see that the prosperity of the wicked is consistent enough with the justice of God.

Object. 2. God's own people oft-times suffer great afflictions in the world; they are persecuted and oppressed, and meet with a variety of troubles, Psal. lxxiii. 14. How stands this with the justice of God?

Ans. 1. The ways of God's judgments, though they are sometimes secret, yet they are never unjust. God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. There are culpable causes in them from which their afflictions spring. They have their spots and blemishes as well as others. Though they may be free from gross and atrocious crimes, yet they are guilty of much pride and passion, censoriousness, worldliness, &c. And the sins of God's people are more provoking in his sight than the sins of other men. And God will not suffer them to pass without correction, Amos iii. 2. 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.' This justifies God in all the evils that befall them.

2. All the trials and sufferings of the godly are designed to refine and purify them, to promote their spiritual and eternal good, Heb. xii. 10. Nothing proclaims God's faithfulness more than his taking such a course with them as may make them better. Hence says David, Psal. cxix. 75. 'I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' Though they are sometimes pinch-

ed with wants, and meet with various outward troubles, yet even these are the accomplishments of a gracious promise, and are ordered for their good. It is to chastise them for their sin, and quicken them to repentance and mortification, to try and exercise their faith and patience, their sincerity and love to God, to wean their hearts from the world, and to promote their growth in grace.

3. It is no injustice in God to inflict a lesser punishment to prevent a greater. The best of God's children have that in them which is meritorious of hell; and doth God any wrong to them when he useth only the rod, when they deserved the scorpion? An earthly parent will not be reckoned cruel or unjust, if he only correct his children who deserved to be disinherited. When God corrects his children, he only puts wormwood into their cup, whereas he might fill it up with fire and brimstone. Under the greatest pressure, they have just cause rather to admire his mercy, than to complain of his justice. So did the afflicted church, 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.'

Object. 3. If God be infinitely just, how could he transfer the punishment from the guilty? This is the objection of the Socinians against Christ's sufferings for the sins of the elect. It is a violation of justice, say they, to transfer the punishment from one to another. How then could the righteous God punish his innocent Son for our sins?

I answer to this in general, That in some cases it is not unjust to punish the innocent for the guilty. For though an innocent person cannot suffer as innocent without injustice, yet he may voluntarily contract an obligation which will expose him to deserved sufferings. The innocent may suffer for the guilty, when he has power to dispose of his own life, and puts himself freely and voluntarily under an obligation to suffer, and is admitted to suffer by him who has power to punish, and when no detriment, but rather an advantage, accrues to the public thereby. In these circumstances, justice hath nothing to say against the punishing of an innocent person in the room of the guilty. Now, there is a concurrence of all these in the case in hand. For,

1. Christ had absolute power to dispose of himself. One reason why a man is not allowed to lay down his life for another is, because his life is not at his own disposal. But Christ was absolute lord of his own life, and had power to keep it

or lay it down as he pleased. So he declares, John x. 18. 'No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.'

2. He freely consented to suffer for his people, and to undergo the punishment that they deserved. To compel an innocent person to suffer for the offences of another, may be an injury. But in this case there was no constraint: for Christ most willingly offered himself: yea, he was not only willing, but most earnest and desirous to suffer and die in our room, Luke xii. 50. 'I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?'

3. The Father admitted him as our Surety, and was well content that his sufferings should stand for ours, and that we thereupon should be absolved and discharged: It was the Father's will that Christ should undertake this work. Hence it is said, Psal. xl. 8. 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.' And the Father loved Christ, because he so cheerfully consented to it, John x. 17. 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.'

4. There was no detriment to the public by Christ's death; but, on the contrary, many advantages redounded to it thereby. One reason why an innocent man cannot suffer for a malefactor, is, because the community would lose a good man, and might suffer by the sparing of an ill member, and the innocent sufferer cannot have his life restored again being once lost. But in this case all things are quite otherwise: for Christ laid down his life, but so as to take it up again. He rose again on the third day, and death was swallowed up of victory. And those for whom he suffered were reclaimed, effectually changed, and made serviceable to God and man. So that here there was no injury done to any party by Christ's sufferings, though an innocent person. Not to them for whom he died; for they have inexpressible benefit thereby: he is made to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Not to the person suffering: for he was perfectly willing, and suffered nothing without his own consent. Not to God: for he himself found out the ransom, and admitted Christ as our Surety. Not to any thing concerned in the government of God: for by the death of Christ all the ends of God's government were secured. His honour was hereby vindicated, the authority of his law preserved,

and his subjects, by such an instance of severity on his own Son, were deterred from violating it. So that there is no injustice to any in God's punishing Christ in his people's stead.

Object. 4. How is it consistent with the justice of God to punish temporary sins with eternal torments in hell? Some think it hard, and scarce consistent with infinite justice, to inflict eternal punishment for sins committed in a little time. But to clear the justice of God in this, consider,

1. That eternal punishment is agreeable to the sanction of the law. The wisdom of God required, that the penalty threatened upon the transgressor should be in its own nature so dreadful and terrible, that the fear of it might conquer and over-rule all the allurements and temptations to sin. If it had not been so, it would have reflected upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver, as if he had been defective, in not binding his subjects firmly enough to their duty, and the ends of government would not have been obtained. And therefore the first and second death was threatened to Adam in case of disobedience. And fear, as a watchful sentinel, was placed in his breast, that no guilty thought or irregular desire should enter in to break the tables of the law deposited there. So that eternal death is due to sinners by the sanction of the law.

2. The righteousness of God in punishing the wicked for ever in hell will appear, if ye consider that God by his infallible promise assures us, that all who sincerely serve and obey him shall be rewarded with everlasting happiness. They shall receive a blessedness most worthy of God to bestow, a blessedness that far surmounts our most comprehensive thoughts and imaginations. For eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him. Now, if everlasting felicity be despised and rejected, nothing remains but endless misery to be the sinner's portion. The consequence is infallible: For if sin, with an eternal hell in its retinue be chosen and embraced, it is most just and equal that the rational creature should inherit the fruit of its own choice. What can be more just and reasonable, than that those who are the slaves of the devil, and maintain his party here in the world, should have their recompense with him for ever hereafter? Nothing can be more just, than that those

who now say to the Almighty, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, should receive that dreadful sentence at last, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*.

3. The punishment of the damned must be eternal, because of the immense guilt and infinite evil of sin. It is owned by common reason, that there ought to be a proportion between the quality of the offence and the degree of the punishment. Justice takes the scales into its hand before it takes the sword. It is a rule in all sorts of judicature, that the degrees of an offence arise according to the degrees of dignity in the person offended. Now, the majesty of God is truly infinite, against whom sin is committed; and consequently the guilt of sin exceeds our boundless thoughts. One act of sin is rebellion against God, and includes in it the contempt of his majesty, the contradiction of his holiness, which is his peculiar glory, the denial of his omniscience and omnipresence, as if he were confined to the heavens, and busied in regulating the harmonious order of the stars, and did not observe what is done here below. And there is in it a defiance of his eternal power, and a provoking him to jealousy, as if we were stronger than he. O, what a dishonour is it to the God of glory; that proud dust should flee in his face, and controul his authority! What a horrid provocation is it to the Most High, that the reasonable creature, that is naturally and necessarily a subject, should despise the divine law and Lawgiver? From this it appears that sin is an infinite evil. There is in it a concurrence of impiety, ingratitude, perfidiousness, and whatever may enhance a crime to an excess of wickedness. Now, sin being an infinite evil, the punishment of it must also be infinite; and because a creature is not able to bear a punishment infinite in degree, by reason of its finite and limited nature, therefore it must be infinite in its duration. And for this cause the punishment of the damned shall never have an end. The almighty power of God will continue them in their being, but they will curse and blaspheme that support, which shall be given them only to perpetuate their torments; and ten thousand times wish that God would destroy them once for all, and that they might for ever shrink away into nothing. But that will never be granted to them. No; they shall not

have so much as the comfort of dying, nor shall they escape the vengeance of God by annihilation.

4. Their punishment must be eternal: for they will remain for ever unqualified for the least favour. The damned are not changed in hell, but continue their hatred and blasphemies against God. The seeds of this are in obstinate sinners here in the world, who are styled *haters of God*: but in the damned this hatred is direct and explicit; the fever is heightened into a phrenzy. The glorious and ever-blessed God is the object of their curses and eternal aversion. Our Lord tells us, that in hell 'there is weeping and gnashing of teeth,' *i. e.* extreme sorrow and extreme fury. Despair and rage are the proper passions of lost souls. For when the guilty sufferers are so weak, that they cannot by patience endure their torments, nor by strength resist the power that inflicts them, and withal are wicked and stubborn, they are enraged and irritated by their misery, and form out blasphemies against the righteous Judge. We may apply to this purpose what is said of the worshippers of the beast, Rev. xvi. 10, 11. 'They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.' The torment and blasphemies of these impenitent idolaters are a true representation of the state of the damned. Now, as they will always sin; so they must always suffer. On these accounts, then, it is agreeable to the wisdom and justice of God that their pains and torments be eternal.

But now it is time to shut up this point with a few instances.

1. It is inconsistent with the nature of God to let sin go unpunished; or, vindictive justice is essential to God. To clear this, consider,

(1.) This is evident from the light of nature. For that God is just, is strongly and deeply stamped upon the minds of the children of men. Hence, when the barbarians saw the viper fasten upon Paul's hand, they cried out that vengeance pursued him as a murderer, Acts xxviii. 4. The very instinct of nature told them, that there was a connection between guilt and punishment. To deny God to be just, is to offer violence to the principles of nature, to put a lie upon those notions which are born with and impressed up-

on our reason. It is to condemn conscience as a cheat, and all the terrors thereof as a false alarm. In a word, it is to eradicate all religion, and to open a flood-gate to all wickedness and impiety.

(2.) This appears from scripture assertions and examples.

[1.] Consider scripture examples and declarations, such as Rev. xvi. 5. 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged,' Rom. ii. 5.—'The righteous judgment of God,' 2 Thess. i. 6. 'It is a righteous thing with God to recompence with tribulation,' Heb. ii. 2. 'Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward,' Heb. xii. 29. 'Our God is a consuming fire,' Rom. i. 32. 'Knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' Compare Gen. xviii. 25. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'

[2.] Think upon scripture examples, with respect to this matter. The angels, the flower and glory of the creation, the first-born of intelligent beings, when they revolted from their Maker, were doomed and cast into hell, where they ~~is~~ reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the last day. Our first parents, and in them all their posterity, because of their apostasy, were sentenced to death and misery. The old world, except eight persons, were swept off the face of the earth, by a devouring deluge, on account of their impiety. Sodom and Gomorrah were by fire from heaven consumed to ashes, because of their vile uncleanness. The Egyptians sunk under multiplied plagues, because they hardened themselves against the Lord, and would not let Israel go. Yea, the Israelites themselves met with many severe judgments in the wilderness, in Canaan, and in Babylon, because they rebelled against the Lord their God. In a word, this people at last, for murdering the Messiah, and rejecting the gospel, were destroyed with a great destruction at the siege of Jerusalem, where eleven thousand perished by sword, famine, and pestilence, and very near a hundred thousand more were carried away captive.

3. This appears from the nature of God, which carries in it the utmost detestation of sin; and this necessarily produces punishment. 'Upon the wicked God will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest,' Psal. xi. 6. Now the reason of all this holy severity is given in the very

next verse, 'For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.' His holy nature prompts him to love righteousness, and consequently to hate and punish all unrighteousness.

(4.) It is evident from the nature of sin. What is sin but the offering of the highest indignity to the Infinite and Supreme Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of mankind? It is an affronting of all his perfections; a reflection upon his wisdom, a contempt of his power, an insult to his holiness, a disparagement of his goodness, and an open defiance to his truth and faithfulness. If then sin be such an evil, an evil infinitely worse than we are capable to represent it, how can any imagine that God will forbear or neglect to punish such who obstinately love and die in the practice of it?

(5.) This will appear, if ye consider God as a Governor and Lawgiver. For his authority as such can never be preserved and maintained, if there be an universal impunity of criminal offences. Rebellion against Heaven would spread far and wide, devils and wicked men would grow absolutely unruly, the Divine Majesty and dominion would become contemptible, and his glorious sovereignty would be rendered vile and despicable, if bold offenders were not severely checked and punished for their enormities.

(6.) Consider, that if vindictive justice be not essential to God, it will be very hard, if not impossible, to give any tolerable account of the death and sufferings of Christ.

2. Is God infinitely just? Then there is a judgment to come. The justice of God requires that men should reap according to what they have sown; that it should be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. But it is not apparently so now in this present world. Here things are out of course; sin is rampant, and runs with a rapid violence. Many times the most guilty sinners are not punished in the present life; they not only escape the justice of men, but are under no conspicuous marks of the justice of God. As sinners prosper and flourish, so saints are wronged and oppressed. They are often cast in a right cause, and can meet with no justice on the earth; yea, the best men are often in the worst condition, and merely upon account of their goodness. They are borne down and oppressed, because they do not make resistance; and are loaded with sufferings many times, because they bear them with patience.

And the reason of these dispensations is, because now is the time of God's patience and of our trial. Therefore there must be a day wherein the justice of God shall be made manifest. Then he will set all things right. He will crown the righteous, and condemn the wicked. Then God shall have the glory of his justice, and his righteousness shall be openly vindicated. At the last day God's sword shall be drawn against offenders, and his justice shall be revealed before all the world. At that day all mouths shall be stopped, and God's justice shall be fully vindicated from all the cavils and clamours of unjust men.

3. This lets us see how unlike to God many men are. Some have no justice at all. Though their place and office oblige them to it, they neither fear God nor regard man. Many times they pervert justice, they decree unrighteous decrees, Isa. x. 1. Many are unjust in their dealings; they trick, cheat, and defraud their neighbours; sometimes in using false weights, the balances of deceit are in their hands, Hos. xii. 7. Some hold the Bible in one hand, and false weights in the other; they cozen, defraud, and cheat, under a specious profession of religion. Some adulterate their commodities; their wine is mixed with water, Isa. i. 22. They mix bad grain with good, and yet sell it for pure grain. There are many ways by which men deceive and impose upon their neighbours. All which shew what a rare commodity justice is among them. But remember this is very unlike God. For he is the just and right one; he is righteous in all his ways. That man cannot possibly be godly who is not just. We are commanded to imitate him in all his imitable perfections. Though he doth not bid you be omnipotent, yet you ought to be just.

4. Is God infinitely just? Then we must not expostulate with or demand a reason of his actions. He hath not only authority on his side, but justice and equity. In all his dispensations towards men, however afflictive they be, he is just and righteous. He layeth judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, Isa. xxviii. 17. It is below him to give an account to us of any of his proceedings. The plumb-line of our reason is too short to fathom the great depths of God's justice: for his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out, Rom. xi. 33. We are to adore his justice, where we cannot see the reason of it.

God's justice hath often been wronged, but never did wrong to any. How unreasonable, then, is it for men to expostulate with and dispute against God?

5. Is God infinitely just? Then the salvation of sinners who have believed in Christ is most secure, and they need not doubt of pardon and acceptance. 'God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins,' 1 John i. 9. God hath promised it, and he will not break his word; yea, he stands bound in justice to do it; for Christ hath satisfied his justice for all your sins who are believers, so that it hath nothing to crave of you. It doth not stand with the justice of God to exact the same debt from you. Your Redeemer did not only satisfy justice, but also merited the exercise of it on your behalf. Hence it is that God is bound in justice to justify you upon your believing on Christ; for he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 26. So that the thoughts even of divine justice, which are terrible to others, may be comfortable to believers.

6. Is God infinitely just? Then the destruction of wicked and impenitent sinners is infallibly certain. For the just God will by no means acquit the guilty. His justice, which is essential to him, cannot but take vengeance on you.

7. *Lastly*, However severely the Lord deals with us, he neither doth nor can do us any wrong; and therefore we should lay our hand on our mouth, Lam. iii. 39. 'Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?'

Sixthly The goodness of God is the next communicable attribute that falls to be considered. The divine goodness is that essential property whereby he is altogether good in himself, and the author of all good to his creatures; *Thou art good, and dost good*, says the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 68. There is a twofold goodness of God, his absolute and his relative goodness.

1. There is an absolute goodness of God. This is that whereby he is conceived to be good in himself, without any relation to his creatures. God is thus good, because his nature is infinitely perfect.

2. There is his relative goodness, by which we are to understand his bounty and benignity. As all fullness dwells in him, so he hath a strong inclination to let it out to his people on all occasions. The whole earth is full of his goodness, Psal. xxxiii. 5.

The goodness of God is manifested,

1. In creation. There is no other perfection of the divine nature so eminently visible in the whole book of the creatures as this is. His goodness was the cause that he made any thing, and his wisdom was the cause that he made every thing in order and harmony. Here the goodness of God shines with a glorious lustre. All the varieties of the creatures which he hath made are so many beams and apparitions of his goodness. It was great goodness to communicate being to some things without himself, and to extract such a multitude of things from the depths of nothing, and to give life and breath to some of these creatures. Divine goodness formed their natures, beautified and adorned them with their several ornaments and perfections, whereby every thing was enabled to act for the good of the common world. Every creature hath a character of divine goodness upon it. The whole world is a map to represent, and a herald to proclaim, this amiable perfection of God. But the goodness of God is manifested especially in the creation of man. He raised him from the dust by his almighty power, and placed him in a more sublime condition, and endued him with choicer prerogatives, than the rest of the creatures. What is man's soul and body but like a cabinet curiously carved, with a rich and precious gem inclosed in it ! God hath made him an abridgment of the whole creation : the links of the two worlds, heaven and earth, are united in him. He communicates with the earth in the dust of his body, and he participates with the heavens in the crystal of his soul. He has the life of angels in his reason, and that of animals in his sense. Further, the divine goodness is manifested in making man after his image, in furnishing the world with so many creatures for his use, in giving him dominion over the works of his hands, and making him lord of this lower world.

2. In our redemption by Jesus Christ. O what astonishing goodness was it for the great and glorious God to give his only begotten Son to the death for such vile rebels and enemies as we all are by nature ! The goodness of God, under the name of his love, is rendered as the only cause of our redemption by Christ, John iii. 16. ' God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' This is an inexpressible *so*, a *so* that all the angels of heaven

cannot analyse. None can conceive or understand the boundless extent and dimensions of it. God gave Christ for us to commend his love, and set it off with an admirable lustre. 'God commended his love towards us (saith the apostle), in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.' O what an expensive goodness and love was this! Our redemption cost God more than what was laid out on the whole creation. 'The redemption of the soul is precious,' says the Psalmist. 'We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Here God parted with his richest jewel, and with the eternal delight of his soul. This cost Christ dear. The Sun of righteousness behoved to be eclipsed, and must veil the beams of his divine glory. He made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of sinful flesh. He did not appear in worldly pomp and magnificence, attended with a splendid retinue, and faring deliciously but in a mean and low condition, without a settled dwelling-place, and was exposed to poverty and reproach. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The last scene of his life was most painful. Upon the very apprehension of his last sufferings it is said, 'he began to be sorrowful,' as if he had been a stranger to grief till then. He endured with unparalleled patience all that wrath and misery that his people deserved to have suffered for ever in hell. O what a dreadful deluge of wrath and fiery indignation fell from heaven upon our ark, of which that of Noah was only but a type! He was bruised and ground to powder as it were in his agony in the garden. O how did his innocent soul boil under the fire of divine wrath! His blood brake through every pore of the vessel, by the extremity of that flame. God spared not his own Son, but dealt with him in extreme severity. He paid the utmost mite of satisfaction for his people's sins that justice could demand. O what admirable love and goodness is manifested here!

3. In his providential conduct and government. Here we must distinguish a twofold goodness of God, common and special.

(1.) There is God's common goodness, which is common to all the creatures. 'God is good to all,' says the Psalmist. All the creatures taste of his goodness. He preserves

them in their beings, continues the species of all things, concurs with them in their distinct offices, and quickens the womb of nature. 'O Lord, thou preservest man and beast,' says David. He visits us every day, and makes us feel the effects of his goodness, in giving us rain and fruitful seasons, and filling our hearts with food and gladness. He waters the ground with his showers, and every day shines with new beams of his goodness.

(2.) There is a special goodness of God to his own people, whom he privileges with spiritual and saving blessings. His goodness to them is truly wonderful, in pardoning their iniquities, healing their spiritual diseases, sanctifying their natures, hearing and answering their prayers, bearing with their infirmities, accepting their imperfect services, supporting them under and delivering them from temptations, solving their doubts, directing and guiding them in their difficulties.

4. The goodness of God will be most signally manifested at the last day. It is laid up in heaven, Psal. xxxi. 19. O who can tell how great goodness is laid up there? In heaven they shall have full draughts of his goodness, even as much as they can hold. There God will be all in all to them, and communicate himself to them immediately, without the intervention of ordinances.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. God is a merciful God, and delights in mercy, 'His tender mercies are over all his works,' Psal. cxlv. 9. There can be no case so bad as to be above or beyond the reach of mercy, to such as come to him in his own way, Isa. lv. 7. seeing his goodness is infinite. The difference between the goodness and mercy of God is, that mercy respects only the miserable, but goodness extends to the happy also.

Object. But how is the severity of God against the wicked, and the godly too, consistent with that infinite goodness?

Ans. It is the property of goodness to hate and punish sin. Hence the Lord said to Moses, *Exod. xxxiii. 19.* 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.' Compare chap. xxxiv. 7. 'Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' The afflic-

tions of the godly are the effect of the divine goodness, and effect goodness in them. Hence says the apostle, Heb. xii. 6. 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' And says the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 71. 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.'

2. God can fully satisfy the desire of the soul, and in him it may rest with complacency and delight. He is all-sufficient in and to himself, and all his creatures. And this bountiful God should be the centre of our affections, desires, and joys. We should be restless and uneasy till we find him, and earnestly long for the rich manifestations of his love and grace.

3. This doctrine of the divine goodness should strongly recommend to us those hard lessons prescribed by our Lord, and which he urges upon his followers from the consideration of his own goodness and beneficence, Mat. v. 44, 45. 'Love your enemies,' &c.

4. Abuse not the divine goodness. This is a great evil, and it is very frequent and common. It began in the first ages of the world, yea, it commenced a few minutes after the creation, and it continues to this very day. O abuse not the goodness of God, by forgetting his benefits, murmuring and repining at your lot and situation in the world, or by taking liberty to sin because of his goodness.

5. Seek not your happiness in created things and enjoyments, but in an ever-bountiful God, who is the spring and source of all goodness and mercy, and who can fully satisfy all the desires of an immortal soul.

Seventhly, The last communicable attribute of God to be taken notice of is his *truth*, which is that perfection of his nature whereby he is faithful, and free from all falsehood. Hence he is called 'the God that cannot lie,' Tit. i. 2. He is true in himself, Deut. xxxii. 4. 'A God of truth, and without iniquity.' Now God is true,

1. In his works both of creation and providence; and that both in his common and more ordinary works of providence, in preserving and governing the creatures; and extraordinary ones, such as the glorious work of redemption, his great and miraculous operations, and the wonderful preservations of and deliverances granted to his church and people when exposed to the greatest dangers. God is true in

all these; as Psal. cxi. 7, 8, 'The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.' Psal. xxv. 10. 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.' It is a part of the church's song, Rev. xv. 3. 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty;; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Rev. xvi. 7. 'Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.' All God's works are true and real things, not chimeras or appearances. He executes true judgments, grants true deliverances, works true miracles; his mercies are true mercies, and his comforts are true comforts. He does not deceive or delude his people with vain shews and appearances.

4. In his word. His word is most pure truth. 'Thy word is truth,' says our Saviour, John xvii. 17. And,

(1.) God is true in all the doctrines which he hath revealed. There is no flaw nor corruption in any of them. They are all the true form of sound words. And especially he is true in the doctrines of the gospel. Hence we read of the 'truth of the gospel,' Gal. ii. 5.; and the gospel is called 'the word of truth,' Eph. i. 13. Some of the doctrines revealed there are above the reach of human reason, as the doctrines of the glorious and adorable Trinity, the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, and the mystical union between him and believers. But though they cannot be comprehended by reason, they are not contrary to it.

(2.) In the historical narratives which he hath recorded in his word, as those of the creation, the fall of man, the drowning of the old world with the deluge, the incarnation of Christ, the many miracles which he wrought, his life and bloody death, &c. In these and other historical relations which we have in the word of God, there is no lie nor mistake at all. Hence Luke says, in his preface to his history, chap. i. 3, 4. 'It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightst know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.'

(3.) In his prophetic predictions. None of them fail or come short of their accomplishment, but they are all fulfilled in their season. A man may foretel such things as depend

on natural causes, as rain and snow, heat and cold, the eclipses of the sun and moon, &c. But things are foretold in the scriptures which are merely contingent, depending upon the free grace of God, or the free will of man, as the rejecting of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, &c. None of its predictions have fallen to the ground. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away. The Lord tells the prophet, 'The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie,' Hab. ii. 3. And after divers prophetic predictions, it is said, Rev. xxii. 6. 'These sayings are faithful and true.'

(4.) In his commands. All his commands are faithful, and his law is truth. All his precepts which he has given us are counter-parts of his own heart, real copies of his approving will. The matter of them is exactly consonant to his holiness, and most acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight. God approves of all that he commands: so that his precepts are a true and perfect rule of holiness, without any flaw or defect.

(5.) In his threatenings. They are always accomplished in their season; not one of them shall fail. Says the Lord to the Jews, by the prophet, Zech. i. 6. 'Did not my word take hold of your fathers?' And the apostle Paul tells us, Rom. ii. 2. 'We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.' It is true, indeed, some threatenings are conditional, and to be understood with the exception of repentance; so that unfeigned repentance and reformation prevents the execution of them; as is clear in the case of Nineveh, and from Jer. xviii. 7, 8. 'At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.' But divine threatenings will surely be executed upon impenitent and incorrigible sinners.

(6.) In his promises. All the promises are *yea* and *amen*, i. e. there shall be an infallible accomplishment of them. Therefore promised blessings are called *sure mercies*, Is. lv. 8. And the gospel, which is the compend of all the promises, is often called *the word of truth*. God's people have found the truth of the promises many times in their

comfortable experience. Says Joshua to the Israelites, Joshua xxiii. 14. 'Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.' Joshua was now about to die, and therefore could not be supposed to feign and dissemble; and he appeals to their own consciences, 'Ye know,' &c. And Solomon speaks to the same purpose, 1 Kings viii. 56. 'Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.' All the promises which he hath made to his people shall have their accomplishment in due time. Now, the truth of God is most frequently taken in this sense in scripture, and in this his faithfulness doth peculiarly consist. And,

[1.] This truth and faithfulness of God shines with peculiar lustre in accomplishing the many promises recorded in the holy scriptures; such as that made to Abraham concerning his seed, that, after their sojourning in a strange land four hundred and thirty years, they should come out again with great substance; which was punctually fulfilled, as Moses tells us, Exod. xii. 41. 'And it came to pass, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.' Such also was the accomplishment of the promise relating to the return of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity after seventy years. No length of time nor distance of place can wear the remembrance of his promise from the divine mind. 'He remembered his holy promise,' says the Psalmist, 'and Abraham his servant,' Psal. cv. 42.

[2.] In accomplishing the promises concerning the Messiah. So it is said, *Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*; grace in regard of our pardon, and truth in regard of the promise of God. This appears in performing the promise of Christ's incarnation after so many revolutions of time, and many expectations of his coming, and many contrary appearances, and long stay of four thousand years after the first promise. After all this, God made good his word, by sending his Son into the world.—It appears in performing

the promise of his death and sufferings. God passed his word to the church, that his Son should suffer death and the wrath of God for elect sinners. And having once passed his word for this, he would not spare him. Rather than God should break his word, his own dear Son must suffer a painful, shameful, and cursed death in his body, and the wrath of God in his innocent soul.—It appears in performing the promise of his resurrection from the dead. God had said, *he would not leave his soul in hell*. [the state of the dead], *nor suffer his holy One to see corruption*. This prophecy and promise was accordingly fulfilled: for he was raised from the dead in solemn triumph. Angels attended his resurrection, and the earth trembled and shook, as a sign of triumph and a token of victory; by which Christ intimated to the whole world, that he had overcome death in his own dominions, and lifted up his head as a glorious conqueror over all his enemies. It was promised that he should rise from the dead on the third day; and this was made good to a tittle.

(3.) In fulfilling his promises, when great difficulties and seeming improbabilities lay in the way of their accomplishment. Thus God promised to give Abraham a son, and he made it good; though Sarah was barren, and both Abraham and she were past age. Again, he brought back the captives from Babylon, though the thing seemed most improbable, and many great difficulties lay in the way. Difficulties are for men, not for God. ‘Is any thing too hard for Jehovah?’ Gen. xviii. 14. See Zech. viii. 6. He is not tied to the road of human probabilities. He will turn nature upside-down, rather than not be as good as his word.

(4.) In fulfilling promises to his people, when their hopes and expectations have been given up. See instances, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. Isa. xlix. 14. There may be much unbelief in good men, their faith may be sorely staggered. Yet God is faithful and true. Men may question his promise, but God cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. ii. 12.

(5.) God’s truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is confirmed by testimonies given to it by the saints in all ages. They have all set to their seal that God is true. They have all borne witness for God, and attested his unspotted faithfulness to the generations that were to come. See instances, Deut. vii. 9. Josh. xxiii. 14. 1 Kings viii. 56. Psal.

cxlvi. 6. All learned men are for experiments: now, the saints in all ages have made experiments upon God's word of promise, and have always found him to be true and faithful. 'The word of the Lord is tried,' says the Psalmist. None that relied on his promise were ever disappointed.

We may here also take a short view of the grounds of God's faithfulness. There are divers glorious attributes and perfections of the divine nature, upon which his truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is built, as so many strong and unshaken pillars. As,

1. His perfect knowledge of all things past. His knowledge is called 'a book of remembrance,' Mal. iii. 16. to signify the continual presence of all things past before him. Men do often break their word, because they forget their promise; but forgetfulness cannot befall a God of infinite knowledge. He will ever be mindful of his covenant, and remember his holy covenant and promises, as the Psalmist speaks.

2. His immutability. Though men in making promises may have a real purpose to perform them, yet they may afterwards change their mind. But God is always firm to his purpose, and cannot change his mind, because of his unchangeable nature. See Mal. iii. 6. Jam. i. 17. Again men are often inconsiderate in making promises, and do often meet with what they did not foresee. But all events are eternally foreseen by God. So all his promises are made with infinite wisdom and judgment. To this purpose is that promise, Hos. ii. 19. 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies.'

3. His power. Whatsoever he hath promised to his people, he is able to perform it. Sometimes men falsify their promise, and cannot make good their word through a defect of power. But God never out promised himself. He can do whatsoever he pleased to do. It is said, Psal. cxxxv. 6. 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth,' &c. Yea, all things are possible with God. This was the foundation of Abraham's faith, which kept it from staggering at the thoughts of the improbabilities which lay in the way of the accomplishment of the promises, Rom. iv. 21. In the case of civil debts, many a man cannot keep his promise, because others break to him.

But though the whole creation should break, God is as able as ever. Hence the prophet says, Hab. iii. 17, 18. 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Believers in Christ can never be undone, though the whole creation should disband and go into ruin.

4. His holiness. Some men are so wicked and malicious, that though they can, yet they will not keep their word. But it is not so with God. He cannot be charged with any wickedness; for there is no unrighteousness in him, Psal. xcii. 15. by reason of the perfect holiness of his nature. It is impossible for him to lie. The deceitfulness and treachery that is to be found in men, flows from the corruption that is lodged in their hearts: but the divine nature is infinitely pure and holy. 'God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Numb. xxiii. 19.

5. His justice and righteousness. A man by virtue of a promise hath a right to the thing promised; so that it is his due; and justice requires to give every one their due. So God by his promise makes himself a debtor, and his justice obliges him to pay. Hence it is said, 1 John i. 9. 'God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' He is faithful to pardon, as he hath promised it; and faithful in keeping promise, because he is just. Though it was his goodness and mercy to make the promise, yet his justice binds him to make it good. It is true, when God makes himself a debtor by his promise, it is indeed a debt of grace; yet it is a debt which it is just for God to pay. Therefore his word of promise is called 'the word of his righteousness,' Psal. cxix. 123.

6. The glory and honour of his name may give us full assurance of his faithfulness in making good his promises. He doth all things for his own glory; and therefore, wherever you find a promise, the honour of God is given as security for the performance of it. Hence his people plead this as a mighty argument to work for them. So Joshua, chap. vii. 9. 'What wilt thou do unto thy great name?'

q. d. 'O Lord, thy honour is a thousand times more valuable than our lives. It is not much matter what become of us. But, O! it is of infinite importance that the glory of thy name be secured, and thy faithfulness kept pure and unspotted in the world.' We find Moses pleading to the same purpose, *Exod. xxxii. 11, 12.* 'Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people;' *q. d.* 'It will be sad enough for the hands of the Egyptians to fall upon thy people; but infinitely worse for the tongues of the Egyptians to fall upon thy name.' In a word, the glory of all God's attributes is engaged for the performance of his promises, especially his faithfulness and power. Now, these are strong pillars upon which God's truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is built. He can as soon cease to be omniscient, unchangeable, omnipotent, infinitely just and holy, as he can cease to be true and faithful. He can as soon divest himself of his glory, and draw an eternal veil over all the shining perfections and excellencies of his nature, as cease to be faithful and true,

But it is high time to finish this subject.

Inf. 1. Is God infinitely true? Then all hypocrisy and dissimulation, all falsehood and dishonesty, in lying, cheating, and double-dealing, is most hateful to God, is most opposite to his holy nature, and flows from the devil and our lusts, as father and mother to them, *John viii. 44.*

2. This lets us see what a sure foundation we have for our faith in believing the truth of what is revealed in the holy scriptures; for they are the word of the God of truth, the word of God that cannot lie. The truth of God is an immoveable rock, upon which we may safely venture our salvation. The public faith of heaven is engaged for the happiness of believers; and can they ever have better security? The whole earth hangs upon the word of God's power; and shall not our faith hang upon the word of God's truth? There is nothing else we can rest upon, but the truth and faithfulness of God. We cannot trust in an arm of flesh,

for this will fail us in the time of our need; nor can we trust in our own hearts, for the Spirit of God tells us that he that doth so is a fool. All other things are sandy foundations, which cannot abide the storm and trial: but the truth of God is an immoveable rock that cannot be shaken.

3. Hence we see that the reformed Protestant religion is the only true religion that is in the world, because it is built upon the infallible truth and veracity of God. We have reason to be thankful to God, that it is not built upon such sandy foundations as human unwritten traditions, or any human testimony whatsoever. It is built upon the God of truth, and not upon fallible men. We admit the testimony of the church as an help to our faith, but not as the ground and foundation of it. The precious truths which we believe, we receive them not upon the testimony of the churches, Popes, or councils, but upon the testimony of the God of truth that cannot lie. But the Popish religion hath no sure foundation. The faith of Papists is built upon the testimony of men; so that their religion hath no more certainty in it, than these men have of infallibility.

4. Hence we may see matter of dreadful terror to all the wicked; for all the threatenings and curses of the law of a faithful God stand in full force against them, and will at last overwhelm them with rapid fury, if they do not fly to the mercy and grace of God, as manifested in Jesus Christ, who by his obedience unto death satisfied all the demands of law and justice, in the room of all who will take the benefit of his undertaking. Though in their atheistical unbelief they may bless themselves, saying, that they shall have peace, though they walk in the imagination of their hearts, to add drunkenness unto thirst; yet the Lord will not spare them, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy will smoke against them, and all the curses that are written in his holy book shall light upon them; yea his wrathful vengeance, like an overflowing scourge, shall sweep them off the sinful stage of time into the depths of the devouring pit, where is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

5. *Lastly*, Imitate God in this his adorable perfection, by 'speaking the truth in love,' Eph. iv. 15. Let the strictest rules of truth and sincerity be observed by you in all your dealings and converse with men. Lay aside all lying, falsehood, and dissimulation, all equivocations and secret resem-

vations in your words and promises, and speak the truth every man with his neighbour.

Thus we have given you a short description of what God is. Imperfect it is, and imperfect it must be, seeing he is incomprehensible. Do ye study to believe what is taught you of God, and apply to him, through the Son of his love, for further discoveries of his glorious perfections and excellencies; and at length ye shall see him as he is, having a more enlarged and extensive knowledge of him, his nature and ways; though even then ye will not be able to comprehend him. For it was a wise and judicious answer of one that was asked, What God is? that if he knew that fully, he should be a God himself. And indeed that being which we can comprehend, cannot be God, because he is infinite. O study God and ye will increase in the knowledge of him.

OF THE UNITY OF GOD.

DEUT. VI. 4.—*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.*

1 COR. VIII. 4.—*We know that there is none other God but one.*

COMPARE JER. X. 10.—*But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God.*

WE have, in several preceding discourses, been endeavouring a little to explain the description of God that is given in our shorter Catechism, agreeable to the holy scriptures; and although it has been very imperfect, seeing it is but little of God we can know here; yet I hope what has been said upon it will tend to your instruction, and establishment in the faith. I now proceed to the next question, relating to the unity of God; which we have very clearly and strongly confirmed by the three passages of scripture which I have read.

In the first of these texts there are two things which we are taught to believe concerning God. (1.) That he is JEHOVAH, a being infinitely and eternally perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient. (2.) That he is the one only God. Let us therefore have no other, nor desire to have any other. Some have thought that in this text there is a plain intima-

tion of the Trinity of Persons in the unity of the Godhead; or here the name of God is thrice mentioned, and yet all-declared to be but one. Happy they who have this one Lord for their God; for they have but one master to please, and but one benefactor to seek to.

In the second text the unity of God is also clearly asserted: *There is none other God but one.*

The third text presents us with a very amiable representation of God. (1.) *As the true God.* He is not a counterfeit, and a mere pretender to divinity, as idols are; but he is really what he has revealed himself to be. He is one upon whom we may depend, and in whom and by whom we cannot be deceived. (2.) *As the living God.* He is life itself has life in himself, and is the fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are dead things, worthless and useless; but ours is the living God, and hath immortality.

From the three passages of scripture compared together, the following doctrine natively arises, viz.

DOCTR. 'There is but one only, the living and true God.'

In discoursing this point, I shall shew,

I. Why God is called *the living God*.

II. Why he is called *the true God*.

III. That there is but *one God*.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew why God is called *the living God*.

1. He is called *the living God*, in opposition to, and to distinguish him from dead idols, Psal. cxv. 4, 5, 6. 1 Thess. i. 9. These were but dead and lifeless things, stocks and stones, silver and gold, which the heathen nations did worship, neglecting the God that made the heavens and the earth. In this respect these idols were viler than the matter of which they were made, as the tree when in the ground had some life, but they had none.

2. Because God is the fountain of life, having all life in himself, John v. 26, and giving life to all things else. All life is in him and from him. (1.) Natural life, Acts xvii. 28. 'For in him we live.' 1 Tim. vi. 13. 'Who quickeneth all things.' (2.) Spiritual life, Eph. ii. 1. 'You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.' (3.) Eternal life, Col. iii. 4. 'Christ is our life.' His giving of these to the creatures proves that they are in him, though in a more eminent way; for nothing can give what it has not.'

II. I proceed to shew why he is called *the true God*.

He is so called to distinguish him from all false or fictitious gods. Hence the apostle speaks of the Thessalonians having 'turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God,' 1 Thess. i. 9. And says the prophet, Jer. x. 11. 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.' The heathens, beside their worship of dead idols, worshipped also living creatures, Deut. xxxii. 17. 'They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up.' They were only gods in their blinded opinion and foolish fancy, not in reality; no more than the picture of a man, mistaken for a man, is a true man.

There is a twofold truth. (I.) Of fidelity or faithfulness. Thus God is true, that is, faithful, as was before explained. But that is not the truth here meant. (2.) A truth of essence, whereby a thing really is, and does not exist in opinion only. Thus the greatest liar is a true man; that is, he is really a man. It is in this sense that truth is attributed to God here. And the meaning is, that there is a true God, and but one true God. That there is a true God, or that truly and really there is a God, may be clearly demonstrated, against atheists, by the light of nature, seeing they refuse scripture-testimony.

1. The works of creation and providence declare that there is a God. The heavens, earth, sea, air, and all that in them is, evidently proclaim their Maker to be divine. Look to the heaven, and behold how it is adorned with sun, moon, and stars. How wisely are these heavenly bodies situated with respect to us! Were they nearer, they would scorch and burn up the earth; were they placed at a greater distance, the earth would be bound with perpetual frost, and so be quite barren. How regularly do these heavenly bodies move, making night and day, summer and winter, in so orderly a manner, that these revolutions have never once ceased! If we consider the earth, we shall find it hang as a ball or globe in the air, yet its foundation immoveable, though hung upon nothing. How is it adorned with trees, flowers, corns, &c. and all things necessary for the use of man and beast! And what an instance of divine wisdom is it, that all things are not found in every place, that so commerce be-

twixt man and man may be advanced, and correspondence be established betwixt different and distant nations, in the reciprocal exchange of the commodities peculiar to each country! Are there not in these the brightest traces of order and symmetry, that point out a God as the former and preserver of them all? But let us look to man, that abridgement of the world, where the prints of a Divine Being appear in the brightest colours. The composition of his body, and the powers of his soul, may convince you of the existence of a Deity. For who but a God could unite such different substances, an immaterial spirit with an earthly body? who could distinguish so many parts, assign to them their situation, form, and temperature, with an absolute fitness for those uses to which they serve? Well may we say with the apostle, Acts xvii. 27, 28. 'He is not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.' We may find him in the activity of our hands, in the beauty of our eyes, and in the vivacity of our senses. And to look inward, who hath endued the soul with such distinct and admirable faculties; the understanding, which exercises an empire over all things, compounds the most disagreeing, and divides the most intimate, by the lowest effects ascends to the highest cause; the will, which with such vigour pursues that which we esteem amiable and good, and recoils with aversion from that which we judge paining and evil; the memory, which preserves fresh and lively images of those things which are committed to its charge? Certainly then there is a God who made us.

As these things have a being, it leads us to the being of a God: for these things cannot be eternal; for then their being would be a necessary being, and so not capable of alteration or destruction. If they had a beginning, they had it from another: then that must either have had it from itself, or another, and so on till we come to the first cause, which is God. For nothing can give itself a being, because so it should be and not be at one and the same time. And the order speaks out infinite wisdom that has so ruled and disposed all; or else it must be attributed to chance; which is far more absurd than to say that a most beautiful fabric was made by the fortuitous concourse of stones, timber, lime, &c. which is shocking to common sense.

2. Conscience tells men there is a God. It may be observ-

ed how it stirs up to duty, though the powers of the world would forbid it under the highest pains; it comforts a man after duty is performed, though he be persecuted for it. It condemns and stings a man for sin, even for secret sins unknown to any in the world, and that even where there is no hazard at all from that quarter. These are terrors that no art can pluck up, nor any force quell; and when men are going out of the world, are most lively and pungent, even when their judgment is most clear, and free from the clouds and the prejudices of passions. How could these things be, if there were not a God, who by an omnipotent hand has planted conscience in their bosoms, as his own vicegerent, that stings them when none sees them? Atheists may, with as much hope of success, attempt to pull the sun, moon, and stars out of heaven, as to eradicate these innate impressions of a Supreme Divine Being.

3. The universal and perpetual consent of all nations in this matter, evinces that there is a God. That must needs be a natural truth, that in all ages, all nations, however different in all other things, have yet held that there is a God, so that they would rather worship any thing than not have some God. Go back to ancient times; ask your fathers, and they will tell you, your forefathers and your most ancient ancestors, and they will declare unto you, both that there is a God, and what he did in their days, and in the old times before them. Nay, inquire of the nations round about you, Spain and Turkey, the barbarous Tartars, the wild Africans, and the ignorant Americans, and they will all with one mouth confess this undeniable truth, That there is a God. This is an universal dictate of nature, spread as far and wide as reason and mankind are on the face of the earth. Some were called atheists among the heathens, not because they owned no God, but because they disowned their false gods. And if there have been any speculative atheists, that is, such who have been at all times thoroughly persuaded that there is no Supreme Divine Being, they have been still looked on as monsters of men, and prodigies in nature, which have been universally abhorred as pests of society, and enemies to mankind. But the truth is, whatever advances men may make towards atheism in their depraved judgments, yet it is absolutely impossible to get the notion of a Deity rooted quite out of the soul.

Let not the atheist (if such a creature can possibly exist in a human form) pretend, that this universal belief of a divine existence which has obtained in the world, is the product of a successful political device, contrived by its crafty governors to keep it in awe and subjection to themselves. For as this is nothing but a cunning insinuation to support the worst of causes, so it is absolutely unaccountable how this device should be so prevalent as to gain ground in the consciences of men, and exercise such an uncontrollable empire over them. Is it possible that a few crafty men should so impose upon all the world, and they should never be, and, for any thing can be seen, shall never be able to free themselves from the fraud?

4. *Lastly*, Will ye consider the multitude of miracles which have occurred in the world. If these wonders of nature which we call miracles be nothing else but a mere lie and forgery, how comes the world to be so generally imposed on? How comes not only the Jewish but the Christian religion to be confirmed and ratified in such a firm manner as they have been amongst men? But if it be true that nature's bonds are sometimes broken, that the ordinary methods of things and actions are crossed, and turned quite another way; if ever the sun stood still, or the angels were seen on an embassy from heaven; if ever God appeared in a flaming bush, and talked with man from the clouds; if ever sin was punished with a shower of fire and brimstone from heaven; in a word, if ever diseases were cured by a touch, and the dead raised to life by prayer: I say, if all these things be true, then answer me, Who is so able and so bold thus to transgress all the laws and bands of nature? Certainly it can be no other than God.

III. I come now to shew that there is but *one God*. There are gods many, and lords many, in title and the opinion of men but there is only one true God, having no fellow or competitor. This great and important truth I shall endeavour to confirm, both from scripture and reason.

1. The scripture is very express and pointed on this head: Deut. vi. 4. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.' Isa. xlv. 6. 'I am the first, and the last, and besides me there is no God. Mark xii. 32. 'There is one God, and there is none other but he.' Consult also the following passages, which clearly establish this article, viz. 1 Sam. ii. 2. Psal. xviii. 31. Isa. xlv. 9. 1 Cor. viii. 4. 6.

2. This truth is clear from reason.

(1.) There can be but one First Cause, which hath its being of itself, and gave being to all other things, and on which all other beings depend, and that is God: for one such is sufficient for the production, preservation, and government of all things: and therefore more are superfluous, for there is no need of them at all. Certainly he that made the world can preserve, govern, and guide it, without the assistance of any other God. For if he needed any assistance, he were not God himself, an infinitely perfect and all-sufficient being. And whatever power, wisdom, or other requisite perfections can be imagined to be in many gods, for making, preserving, and governing the world, all these are in one infinitely-perfect being. Therefore it is useless to feign many, seeing one is sufficient.

(2.) There can be but one infinite being, and therefore there is but one God. Two infinities imply a contradiction. Seeing God fills heaven and earth with his presence, and is infinite in all the perfections and excellencies of his nature, there can be no place for another infinite to subsist.

(3.) There can be but one Independent Being, and therefore but one God. [1.] There can be but one independent in being: for if there were more gods, either one of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and then that one would be the only God: or none of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and so none of them would be God; because none of them would be independent, or the fountain of being to all. [2.] There can be but one independent in working. For if there were more independent beings, then in those things wherein they will and act freely, they might will and act contrary things, and so oppose and hinder one another: so that being equal in power, nothing would be done by either of them. Yea, though we should suppose a plurality of gods agreeing in all things, yet seeing their mutual consent and agreement would be necessary to every action, it plainly appears, that each of them would necessarily depend on the rest in his operations; and so none of them would be God, because not absolutely independent.

(4.) There can be but one Omnipotent. For if there were two omnipotent beings, then the one is able to do what soever he will, and yet the other is able to resist and hinder

him. And if the one cannot hinder the other, then that other is not omnipotent. Again, we must conceive two such beings, either as agreeing, and so the one would be superfluous; or as disagreeing, and so all would be brought to confusion, or nothing would be done at all; for that which the one would do, the other would oppose and hinder; just like a ship with two pilots of equal power, where the one would be ever cross to the other? when the one would sail, the other would cast anchor. Here would be a continual confusion, and the ship must needs perish. The order and harmony of the world, the constant and uniform government of all things, is a plain argument, that there is but one only Omnipotent being that rules all.

(5.) The supposition of a plurality of gods is destructive to all true religion. For if there were more than one God, we would be obliged to worship and serve more than one. But this it is impossible for us to do; as will plainly appear. if ye consider what divine worship and service is. Religious worship and adoration must be performed with the whole man. This is what the divine eminence and excellency requires, that we love him with all our heart, soul and strength, and serve him with all the powers and faculties of our souls, and members of our bodies; and that our whole man, time, strength, and all we have, be entirely devoted to him alone. But this cannot be done to a plurality of gods. For in serving and worshipping a plurality, our hearts and strength, our time and talents, would be divided among them. To this purpose our Lord argues, Matth. vi. 24. 'No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' Mammon is thought to be an idol, which the heathens reckoned to be the god of money and riches. Now, says Christ, you cannot serve them both; if you would have the Lord for your God, and serve him, you must renounce mammon. We cannot serve two gods or masters: if but one require our whole time and strength, we cannot serve the other.

6. If there might be more gods than one, nothing would hinder why there might not be one, or two, or three millions of them. No argument can be brought for a plurality of gods, suppose two or three, but what a man might, by parity of reason, make use of for ever so many. Hence it

is, that when men have once begun to fancy a plurality of gods, they have been endless in such fancies and imaginations. To this purpose is that charge against the Jews, who in this conformed themselves very much to the nations round about them, 'According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah,' Jer. ii. 28. Varro reckons up three hundred gods whom the heathens worshipped, and Hesiod reckons about three thousand of them. Indeed, if we once begin to fancy more gods than one, where shall we make an end? So that the opinion or conception of a plurality of gods is most ridiculous and irrational.

And this should be observed against those who pretend, that the Father is the most high God, and that there is no most high God but one, yet that there is another true God, viz. Christ, who in very deed, as to them, is but a mere man; yet they pretend he is the true God. Christ is God, and the true and most high God. But, in opposition to them, consider that to be a man and to be a God are opposite, and cannot be said of one in respect of one nature, Jer. xxxi. 9. Acts xiv. 15. Jer. x. 11.

I shall now shut up this subject with a few inferences.

1. Wo to atheists, then, whether they be such in heart or life; for their case is dreadful and desperate: and they shall sooner or later feel the heaviest strokes of the vengeance of that God whom they impiously deny, whether in opinion or by works. To dissuade from this fearful wickedness, consider,

(1.) That atheism is most irrational. It is great folly; and therefore the Psalmist saith, Psal. xiv. 1. 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' It is contrary to the stream of universal reason; contrary to the natural dictates of the atheist's own soul; and contrary to the testimony of every creature. The atheist hath as many arguments against him as there are creatures in heaven and earth. Besides, it is most unreasonable for any man to hazard himself on this bottom in the denial of a God. May he not reason thus with himself, what if there be a God, for any thing that I know? then what a dreadful case will I be in when I find it so? If there be a God, and I fear and serve him, I gain a blessed and glorious eternity; but if there be no God, I lose nothing but my sordid lusts, by believing that there is one. Now, ought not reasonable creatures to argue

thus with themselves? What a doleful meeting will there be between the God who is denied, and the atheist that denies him! He will meet with fearful reproaches on God's part, and with dreadful terrors on his own: all that he gains is but a liberty to sin here, and a certainty to suffer for it hereafter, if he be in an error, as undoubtedly he is.

(2.) Atheism is most impious. What horrid impiety is it for men to deny their Creator a being, without whose goodness they could have had none themselves? Nay, every atheist is a Deicide, a killer of God as much as in him lies. He aims at the destruction of his very being. The atheist says upon the matter, that God is unworthy of a being, and that it were well if the world were rid of him.

(3.) Atheism is of pernicious consequence both to others and to the atheist himself. To others: for (1). It would root out the foundation of government, and demolish all order among men. The being of God is the great guard of the world: for it is the sense of a Deity, upon which all civil order in cities and kingdoms is founded. Without this, there is no tie upon the consciences of men to restrain them from the most atrocious impieties and villainies. A city of atheists would be a heap of confusion. There could be no traffic nor commerce, if all the sacred bonds of it in the consciences of men were thus snapt asunder by denying the existence of God. (2.) It is introductive of all evil into the world. If you take away God, you take away conscience, and thereby all rules of good and evil. And how could any laws be made, when the measure and standard of them is removed? for all good laws are founded upon the dictates of conscience and reason, and upon common sentiments in human nature, which spring from a sense of God. So that if the foundation be destroyed, the whole superstructure must needs tumble down. A man might be a thief, a murderer, and an adulterer, and yet in a strict sense not be an offender. The worst of actions could not be evil, if a man were a god to himself. Where there is no sense of God, the bars are removed, and the flood-gates of all impiety rush in upon mankind. The whole earth would be filled with violence, and all flesh would corrupt their way.

Again, atheism is pernicious to the atheist himself, who denies the being of God, or endeavours to erase all notions of the Deity out of his mind. What can he gain by this

but a sordid pleasure, unworthy of a reasonable nature? And suppose there were no God, what can he lose but his fleshly lusts, by believing there is one? By believing and confessing a God, a man ventures no loss; but by denying him, he runs the most desperate hazard if there be one. For this exposes him to the most dreadful wrath and vengeance of God. If there be a hotter receptacle in hell than another, it will be reserved for the atheist, who strikes and fights against God's very being.

(4.) Atheists are worse than heathens: for they worshipped many gods, but these worship none at all. They preserved some notion of God in the world, but these would banish him from both heaven and earth. They degraded him, but these would destroy him. Yea, they are worse than the very devils: for the devils are under the dread of this truth, That God is. It is said they 'believe and tremble,' Jam. ii. 19. It is impossible for them to be atheists in opinion; for they feel there is a God by that sense of his wrath that torments them. There may be atheists in the church, but there are none in hell. Thus atheism is a most dreadful evil, most carefully to be guarded against.

Inf. 2. Seeing there is one only the living and true God, we owe the most perfect and unlimited obedience to his will. We are to obey the will of his command with readiness and alacrity; and submit to the will of his providence with the utmost cheerfulness, without fretting or murmuring.

Inf. 3. Is God one? then his children should live in unity, that they may be one as he is one. They should study to be one in judgment and opinion, one in affection, and one in practice. We should all live as the family of one God, carefully avoiding divisions, and whatever may tend to interrupt the communion of saints.

Inf. 4. Seeing God is one, he should be the centre of our affections, love, fear, delight, joy, &c. Deut. vi. 4, 5. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.'

I shall conclude all with a few directions.

1. Beware of such opinions as tend to atheism, and aim at the undermining of this supreme truth, that God is. There are many opinions which have a woful tendency this way. Such is that of denying the immortality of the soul.

This is a stroke at a distance at the very being of God, who is the Supreme Spirit. There is an order among spirits; first the souls of men, then angels, and then God. Now, these degrees of spirits are, as it were, a rail and fence about the sense we have of the being and majesty of God. And such as deny the immortality of the soul, strike at a distance at the eternity and existence of the Deity.

Another opinion is, that men of all religions shall be saved; so that it is no matter what religion a man be of, if he walk according to the principles of it, and be of a sober moral life. In these latter times some are grown weary of the Christian religion, and by an excess of charity betray their faith, and plead for the salvation of heathens, Turks, and infidels. But ye should remember, that, as there is but one God, and one heavenly Jerusalem, so there is but one faith, and one way by which men can come to the enjoyment of God there. Such libertine principles have a manifest tendency to shake people loose of all religion. To make many doors to heaven, as one says, is to widen the gates of hell.

Another opinion tending to atheism is, the denying of God's providence in the government of the world. Some make him an idle spectator of what is done here below, asserting that he is contented with his own blessedness and glory, and that whatever is without him is neither in his thoughts nor care. Many think that this world is but as a great clock or machine, which was set a-going at first by God, and afterwards left to its own motion. But if ye exempt any thing from the dominion of providence, then you will soon run into all manner of libertinism. If Satan and wicked men may do what they will, and God be only a looker-on, and not concerned with human affairs, then ye may worship the devil, lest he hurt you, and fear men, though God be propitious to you.

2. Beware of indulging sin. When ye take a liberty to sin, and gratify your vile and sordid lusts, you will hate the law that forbids it; and this will lead you to a hatred of the Lawgiver; and hatred of God strikes against his very being. When once you allow yourselves an indulgence to sin, you will be apt to think, O that there were no God to punish me for my crimes! and would gladly persuade yourselves that there is none; and will think it your

only came to do what he can to root out the notions of God in your own minds, for your own quiet, that so ye may wallow in sin without remorse.

3. Prize and study the holy scriptures, for they shew clearly that there is a God. There are more clear marks and characters of a Deity stamped upon the holy scriptures than upon all the works of nature. Therefore converse much with them. By this means was Junius converted from atheism. His father perceiving him to be so atheistical, caused lay a Bible in every room, so that into whatsoever room he entered, a Bible haunted him; and he fancied it upbraided him thus: 'Wilt thou not read me, atheist? wilt thou not read me?' Whereupon he read it, and was thereby converted. I say then, study the holy scriptures, and in doing so, learn to submit your reason to divine revelation. For some men, neglecting the scriptures, and going forth in the pride of their own understandings, have at last disputed themselves into flat atheism.

4. Study God in the creatures as well as in the scriptures. The creatures were all made to be heralds of the divine glory, and his glorious being and perfections appear evidently in them. Hence saith the Psalmist, Psal. xix. 1—4. 'The heavens declare the glory of God? and the firmament sheweth his handy-work, day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world: in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.' The world is sometimes compared to a book, and sometimes to a preacher. The universe is like a great printed book, wherein God sets forth himself to our view; and the great diversity of creatures which are in it, are as so many letters, out of which we may spell his name. And they all preach loudly unto us the glorious being and excellencies of God. And therefore the apostle tells us, Rom. i. 20. 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.' In the book of the creatures God hath written a part of the excellency of his name; and you should learn to read God wherever he hath made himself legible to you.

5. *Lastly*, Ye who are yet sinners, lying in your natural state of sin and misery, come unto God in Christ, and receive him as your God by faith, and so ye will be preserved from atheism. And ye who are believers in Christ, be often viewing God in your own experiences of him. Have you not often found God in the strengthening, reviving, and refreshing influences of his grace upon your souls? Have ye not had sweet manifestations of his love? Have you not had frequent refreshing tastes of his goodness, in pardoning your iniquities, hearing and answering your prayers, supplying your wants, and feasting your souls? The reviewing of such experiences will be a mighty preservative against atheism. Can you doubt of his being, when you have been so often revived, refreshed, and supported by him? The secret touches of God upon your hearts, and your inward converses with him, are to you a clearer evidence of the being of God, than all the works of nature.

OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

1 John v. 7.—*For there are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.*

IN the 5th verse of this chapter, John lays down a fundamental article of the Christian faith, That Jesus is the Son of God; and brings in the witnesses of this truth, ver. 7. and 8. The text condescends on the divine heavenly witnesses. Where, consider,

1. Their number, *three*, viz. three persons.
2. Their names, *the Father, the Word*, that is, the Son, so called, because he reveals the Father's mind, and *the Holy Ghost*. And here is noted the order of their subsisting also.
3. The majesty and glory of these witnesses; they are *in heaven*, manifesting their glory there, and from it have borne record; which should make the inhabitants of the world to believe their testimony.
4. Their act: They *bear record* to this truth.
5. Their unity: They are *one*, one God; not only one in consent and agreement, but one thing, one substance, one essence.

The doctrine evidently arising from the words is,

Doctr. 'There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, *the Godhead*, and *a person*.

II. Shew that there are three persons in the Godhead.

III. Prove that these three are distinct persons.

IV. Demonstrate that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

V. Evince the weight and importance of this article of the Christian faith.

VI. *Lastly*, Deduce a few inferences.

I. I am to explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, *the Godhead*, and *a person*.

1. By *the Godhead* is meant the nature or essence of God, Acts xvii, 29. even as by *manhood* is understood the nature of man. Now the Godhead is but one, there being but one God,

2. A divine person, or a person in the Godhead, is the Godhead distinguished by personal properties, Heb. i. 3. where Christ the Son of God is called 'the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.' For consider the Godhead as the fountain or principle of the Deity, so it is the first person; consider it as begotten of the Father, it is the second; and as proceeding from the Father and the Son, it is the third person.

II. Our next business is to shew that there are three persons in the Godhead. This is confirmed by the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament.

1. The Old Testament plainly holds forth a plurality of persons in the Godhead, Gen. i. 26. 'God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.' Chap. iii. 22. 'And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.' This cannot be understood of angels: for man is said to be created after the image of God, but never after the image of angels; and the temptation was, 'Ye shall be as gods,' not as angels. Nor must it be conceived, that God speaks so after the manner of kings; for that way of speaking is used rather to note modesty than royalty. But when God speaks so as to

discover most of his royalty, he speaks in the singular number, as in the giving of the law, 'I am the Lord thy God.' This trinity of persons is also not obscurely mentioned in Psal. xxxiii. 6. 'By the Word of the Lord, or JEHOVAH, were the heavens made; and all the host of them, by the breath, or Spirit, of his mouth.' Here is mention made of *Jehovah the Word* and the *Spirit*, as jointly acting in the work of creation. Accordingly we find, that 'all things were made by the Word,' John i. 3. and that 'the Spirit garnished the heavens,' Job xxvi. 13. Nay, a Trinity of persons is mentioned, Isa. lxiii. where, besides that the Lord, or Jehovah, is three times spoken of, ver. 7, we read, of 'the angel of his presence,' which denotes two persons and 'his Spirit,' ver. 9, 10. So that it evidently appears, that the doctrine of the Trinity was revealed under the Old Testament.

2. The New Testament most plainly teaches this doctrine.

(1.) I begin with the text, where it is expressly asserted, *There are three that bear record*, &c. Here are three witnesses, and therefore three persons. Not three names of one person: for if a person have ever so many names, he is still but one witness. Not three Gods, but one.

(2.) In the baptism of Christ, Matth. iii. 16, 17. mention is made of the Father speaking with an audible voice, the Son in the human nature baptised by John, and the Holy Ghost appearing in the shape of a dove; plainly importing three divine persons.

(3.) This appears from our baptism, Matth. xxviii. 8. 19. 'Go ye and teach all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.' Observe the words, *in the name*, not *names*; which denotes, that these three are one God: and yet they are distinctly reckoned three in number, and so are three distinct persons.

(4.) It appears from the apostolical benediction, where all blessings are sought from the three persons distinctly mentioned, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.'

III. That these three are distinct persons, (for though they cannot be divided, yet they are distinguished), is evident. For the Son is distinct from the Father 'being the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 2.; and in John viii. 17, 18.

he reckons his Father one witness and himself another. And that the Holy Ghost is distinct from both, appears from John xiv. 16, 17. 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth.' And the text is plain for the distinction of all the three. Now, they are distinguished by their order of subsisting, and their incommunicable personal properties. In respect of the order of subsistence, the Father is the first person, as the fountain of the Deity, having the foundation of personal subsistence in himself; the Son is the second person, and hath the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father; and the Holy Ghost is the third person, as having the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father and the Son. And so for their personal properties,

1. It is the personal property of the Father to beget the Son, Heb. i. 5, 6, 8. 'Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.—But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.' This cannot be ascribed either to the Son or Holy Ghost.

2. It is the property of the Son to be begotten of the Father, John i. 14. 18. 'We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.'

3. The property of the Holy Ghost is to proceed from the Father and the Son, John xv. 26. 'When the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me,' in Gal. iv. 6. he is called 'the Spirit of the Son;' and in Rom. viii. 9. 'the Spirit of Christ.' He is said to 'receive all things from Christ,' John xvi. 14, 15.; to be 'sent by him,' John xv. 26.; and to be 'sent by the Father in Christ's name,' John xiv. 26. All this plainly implies, that the Holy Spirit proceedeth both from the Father and the Son. This generation of the Son and Holy Ghost was from all eternity. For as God is from everlast-

ing to everlasting, so must this generation and procession be: and to deny it, would be to deny the supreme and eternal Godhead of all the three glorious persons.

IV. I proceed to shew, that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. To this end consider,

1. How express the text is, *These three are one*. When the apostle speaks of the unity of the earthly witnesses, ver. 8. he says, they 'agree in one,' acting in unity of consent or agreement only. But the heavenly witnesses are *one*, viz. in nature or essence. They are not only of a like nature or substance, but one and the same substance; and if so, they are and must be equal in all essential perfections, as power and glory.

2. There is but one true God, as was before proved, and there can be but one true God. Now, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them the true God; and therefore they are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. And this I shall prove by scripture-testimony.

First, That the Father is true God, none that acknowledge a God do deny. Divine worship and attributes are ascribed to him. But,

Secondly, That the Son is true God, appears if ye consider,

1. The scripture expressly calls him *God*, Rom. ix. 5. John i. 1. Acts xx. 28.; 'the true God' 1 John v. 20.; 'the great God,' Tit. ii. 13.; the 'mighty God,' Isa. ix. 6. 'Jehovah or Lord,' Mal. iii. 1. which is a name proper to the true God only, Psal. lxxxiii. ult.

2. The attributes of God, which are one and the same with God himself, are ascribed to him; as eternity, Micah v. 2. 'Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting; independency and omnipotence, Rev. i. 8.—'The Almighty;' omnipresence, John iii. 13. where he is said to be 'in heaven,' when bodily on earth; and Matth. xxviii. 20. 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;' omniscience, John xxi. 17. 'Lord thou knowest all things,' says Peter to him; and unchangeableness, Heb. i. 11 12. 'They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.'

3. The works proper and peculiar to God are ascribed to

him ; as creation, John i. 3. ' All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' Conservation of all things, Heb. i. 3.—' upholding all things by the word of his power.' Raising the dead by his own power, and at his own pleasure, John v. 21, 26. ' The Son quickeneth whom he will.' The Father ' hath given to the Son to have life in himself.' The saving of sinners, Hos. i. 7.—I will save them by the Lord their God.' Compare chap. xiii. 4. ' in me is thine help.' Yea, whatsoever the Father doth, the Son doth likewise.

4. Divine worship is due to him, and therefore he is true God, Matth. iv. 10. The angels are commanded to ' worship him,' Heb. 1. 8. All must give the same honour to him as to the Father, John v. 23. We must have faith in him, and they are blessed that believe in him, Psal. ii. 12. compare Jer. xvii. 5. We are to pray to him, Acts vii. 58.; and we are baptised in his name, Matth. xxviii. 19. Nay, he is expressly said to be ' equal with the Father,' Phil. ii. 6. and ' one with him.' John x. 30. Now, seeing God will ' not give his glory to another,' Isa. xlviii. 11. because he is true and cannot lie, and he is just, it follows, that though Christ be a distinct person, yet he is not a distinct God from his Father, but one God with him, the same in substance equal in power and glory. And it is no contradiction to this doctrine, when Christ says, ' My Father is greater than I,' John xiv. 28. ; for he is not speaking there of his nature as God, but of his mediatory office ; and hence he is called the Father's ' servant,' Is. xlii. 1.

Thirdly, That the Holy Ghost is true God, or a divine person, appears, if ye consider,

1. The scripture expressly calls him God, Acts v. 3, 4. 1 Cor. iii. 16. Isa. vi. 9. compared with Acts xxviii. 25. 26. 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3. He is called ' Jehovah, or the Lord,' Num. xii. 6. compare 2. Pet. i. 21.

2. Divine attributes are ascribed to him ; as omnipotence, he ' worketh all in all,' 1 Cor. xii. 6, 9, 10, 11. ; omnipresence, Psal. cxxxix. 7. ; and omniscience, 1 Cor. ii. 10.

3. Works peculiar to God are ascribed to him ; as creation, Psal. xxxiii. 6 ; conservation, Psal. civ. 30. ; working miracles, Matt. xii. 28. ; raising the dead, Rom. viii. 11. ; inspiring the prophets, 2 Tim. iii. 16. compare 2 Pet. i. 21.

4. Divine worship is due to him. We are baptised in his

name, Matth, xxviii. 19.; we are to pray to him, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Acts iv. 23, 25. compare 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3.

Hence it appears,

1. That the Godhead is not divided, but that each of the three persons hath the one whole Godhead, or divine nature.

2. That it is sinful to imagine any inequality amongst the three divine persons, or to think one of them more honourable than another, seeing they are all one God.

V. I proceed to consider the weight and importance of this article. It is a fundamental article, the belief whereof is necessary to salvation. For those that are 'without God,' Eph. ii. 12. and 'have not the Father,' cannot be saved; but 'whoso denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father,' 1 John ii. 23. Those that are none of Christ's cannot be saved; but 'he that hath not the Spirit, is none of his,' Rom. viii. 9. None receive the Spirit but those that know him. John xiv. 17. This mystery of the Trinity is so interwoven with the whole of religion, that there can neither be any true faith, right worship, or obedience without it. For take away this doctrine, and the object of faith, worship, and obedience is changed; seeing the object of these declared in the scripture, is the three persons in the Godhead; and the scriptures know no other God. Where is faith, if this be taken away? John xvii. 3. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Here it is to be observed, that our Lord does not call the *Father only* the true God, exclusive of the other persons of the Trinity; but that he (including the other persons who all subsist in the same one undivided essence) is the *only true God*, in opposition to idols, falsely called gods. 1 John ii. 23. 'Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.' There is no more true worship or fellowship with God in it: 'For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father,' Eph. ii. 18. And there is no more obedience without it, John xv. 23. 'He that hateth me,' says Christ, 'hateth my Father also.' John v. 23. 'He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.' We are debtors to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit, and are bound by baptism to the obedience of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. How much ought we to prize divine revelation, where-

in we have a discovery of this incomprehensible mystery ! This is a truth which nature's light could never have found out. It is above reason, though not contrary to it ; for reason, though it could never have brought it to light, yet when it is discovered, it must needs yield to it ; for as the judgment of sense must be corrected by reason, so the judgment of reason by faith.

2. See here that God whom you are to take for your God, to love, trust in, worship and obey, even the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is that God who offers himself to you in the gospel, and whom you are to take for your God in Christ. This is that Father who elected a select company of sinners unto salvation ; this is that Son that redeemed them unto God by his blood ; and this is that Spirit that renews and sanctifies them, making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

3. *Lastly*, Take this Father for your Father, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and be obedient children, if he would be reckoned of his seed. Receive the Son, and slight him not. Give your consent to the gospel-offer, seeing it is your Maker that offers to be your husband. And grieve not the Holy Spirit, lest ye be found fighters against God.



OF THE DECREES OF GOD.

EPHES. i. 11.—According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

THE apostle here gives an instance of the sovereign freedom of divine grace through Jesus Christ in the believing Jews.

1. There is here the high privilege they were advanced to, a right to the heavenly inheritance, which had been forfeited by the sin of man.

2. Through whom they had obtained it *in him* ; by virtue of the merits, the obedience and satisfaction of Christ.

3. Why they obtained it, while others had not. Not that they were more worthy than others, but because they were predestinated, elected, or fore-ordained to salvation, and all the means of it.

4. There is the certainty of the efficacy of predestination.

It is *according to his purpose*; that is, his firm purpose and peremptory decree to bring such things to pass. And this certainly in particular is evinced by a general truth, *Who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will*. Wherein we may notice.

(1.) God's effectual operation, *he worketh*. The word signifies to work powerfully and efficaciously, so as to overcome all contrary resistance, and all difficulties in the way; which is exactly God's way of working. And this working takes place in the works of creation and providence.

(2.) The manner how God works. The plan and scheme according to which his works are framed, is *the counsel of his will*. His will is his decree and intention; and it is called *the counsel of his will*, to denote the wisdom of his decrees, his most wise and free determination therein. As God's decree is an act of his will, and so most free, considered in relation to the creatures; so his decree and will are never without counsel; he willeth or decreeth things to be done with the greatest reason and judgment, most wisely as well as freely.

(3.) The object of his working after this manner, *all things*. This cannot be restricted to the blessings which the apostle had been speaking of immediately before, but must be understood of all things whatsoever, and of all their motions and actions as such; which therefore are the object of God's decrees.

The text plainly affords this doctrine, viz.

Doctr. 'God hath fore-ordained, according to the counsel of his own will, whatsoever comes to pass.'

Here I shall,

I. Explain the nature of a decree.

II. Consider the object of God's decrees.

III. Speak of the end of his decrees.

IV. Touch at their properties.

V. Make improvement.

I. I am to explain the nature of a decree. The text calls it *a purpose, a will*. For God to decree is to purpose and fore-ordain, to will and appoint that a thing shall be or not be. And such decrees must needs be granted, seeing God is absolutely perfect, and therefore nothing can come to pass without his will; seeing there is an absolute and necessary dependence of all things and persons on God as the first

cause. But there is a vast difference betwixt the decrees of God and men ; whereof this is the principal : Mens purposes or decrees are distinct from themselves, but the decrees of God are not distinct from himself. God's decrees are nothing else but God himself, who is one simple act ; and they are many only in respect of their objects, not as they are in God ; even as the one heat of the sun melts wax and hardens clay. To say otherwise is to derogate from the absolute simplicity of God, and to make him a compound being. It is also to derogate from his infinite perfection ; for whatsoever is added to any thing argues a want, which is made up by the accession of that thing, and so introduces a change ; but God is absolutely unchangeable. Neither could God's decrees be eternal, if it were not so ; for there is nothing eternal but God.

II. I proceed to consider the object of God's decrees. This is whatsoever comes to pass. He *worketh all things*, says the text. God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass ; and nothing comes to pass but what he has decreed to come to pass. We may consider the extent of the divine decree under the three following heads.

1. God has decreed the creation of all things that have a being.

2. He has decreed to rule and govern the creatures which he was to make.

3. He has decreed the eternal state of all his rational creatures.

First, God decreed to rear up this stately fabric of the world, the heavens and the earth, the sea and the land, with all the great variety of creatures which inhabit them. There are myriads of holy angels in heaven, cherubims and seraphims, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, angels and archangels. There are many shining luminaries in the firmament, the sun, and the moon, and innumerable glittering stars. There is a great variety of creatures on the earth, animals, plants, trees, and minerals, with various forms, shapes, colours, smells, virtues, and qualities. The sea is inhabited by many creatures, Psal. civ. 25. Now, God decreed to make all these things, Rev. iv. 11. 'Thou hast created all things.'

Secondly, God hath decreed the government of all his creatures. He preserves and upholds them in their beings,

and he guides and governs them in all their motions and actions. He is not only the general spring and origin of all the motions and actions of the creatures, but he appoints and orders them all immediately.

1. He has decreed all their motions and actions: 'For (says the apostle) of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' Rom. xi. ult. This is clear from God's knowing all these things before they come to pass; which knowledge of them must needs be in the decree, upon which the coming to pass of all things depends.

Not only good things, but evil things fall within the compass of his holy decree. Evils of punishment are truly good, being the execution of justice, as it is good in a magistrate to punish evil-doers. God owns himself to be the author of these evils, Amos iii. 6. 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' And yet he has decreed the effecting of these. As for the evils of sin, these also fall within the compass of the decree of God, as is clear in the case of crucifying of Christ, Matt. ii. 23. 'Him (says the apostle to the Jews) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' And says the apostle, Acts iv. 27. 28. 'For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.' This appears also in the case of Pharaoh refusing to let Israel go, and pursuing them when they had gone, whose heart God hardened, Exod. xiv. 4; and in the sin of Joseph's brethren in selling him into Egypt; of which Joseph says, Gen. xlv. 8. 'So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.' It is true, God decreed not the effecting of sin, for then he should have been the author of it, but he decreed the permission of sin. And though sin in itself is evil, yet God's permitting of it is good, seeing he can bring good out of it; and it is just in him to permit it, where he is not bound to hinder it. Yet this is not a naked permission, whereby the thing may either come to pass or not, but such as infers a certainty of the event, so that in respect of the event the sin cannot but come to pass. Hence our Lord says, Matth. xviii. 7. 'Wo unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be

that offences come.' And says the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 19. 'There must be heresies among you.' See also Acts iv. 27, 28. forecited.

2. And not only necessary things, as the burning of the fire, but the most free acts of the creature, and the most casual things, fall under the divine decree. Free acts, as Prov. xx. 1. 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.' To this purpose are the foresaid instances of the Jews, Pharaoh, and Joseph's brethren.—The most casual, as in the case of the casual slaughter mentioned, Exod. xxi. 12, 13. and Deut. xix. 3. where mention is made of the Lord's delivering the person slain into the hands of the slayer, though he had no intention to slay him. Such also is the case of lots, Prov. xvi. 33. 'The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.' This holds also in the case of sparrows, and the hairs of the head falling, which cannot be done without God, Matth. x. 29, 30. And thus not only great things, but small things fall within the compass of the divine decree.

But more especially let us consider God's decrees with respect to the government of rational creatures. This we may take up in the following particulars.


1. God has decreed what kingdoms and monarchies should be on the earth, what princes and potentates should rule and govern them, and whether their government should be mild or tyrannical; how long each kingdom should continue, when they should have peace and when war, when prosperity and when adversity. We find wonderful discoveries made to Daniel with respect to these things.

2. God has decreed every thing relating to the lot and condition of particular persons.

(1.) He has decreed the time and place of their birth, whether it should be under the law or gospel, in a land of light or darkness; whether among the sayage Indians in America, or among the more polite and civilized people of Europe; whether among Mahometans, Papists, or Protestants. All this was decreed by the Lord, who 'hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation,' Acts xvii. 26.

(2.) He hath decreed every man's lot and condition, whe-

ther it shall be high or low, rich or poor, noble or ignoble, learned or unlearned. He hath determined the trade and employment they should follow, the particular business they shall betake themselves to. Many times God's providence over-rules mens purposes and designs, for fulfilling his own counsels. Matters are sometimes strangely wheeled about, so that not what we or our parents designed, but what God hath purposed, shall take place. Amos was meanly employed at first, but God designed him for a more honourable calling: he was taken from the office of a herdman, and gatherer of sycamore fruit, and invested with a commission to prophesy to the people of Israel, Amos vii. 14, 15. David followed the ewes, and it is like never raised his thoughts to higher things in the days of his youth; but God made him the royal shepherd of a better flock, Psal. lxxviii. 70, 71. The most part of the apostles were fishermen; but Christ called them to a more high and eminent station, even to be extraordinary officers in his church and fishers of men.

(3.) God hath decreed what tions men shall have in the world. Their wives and children are appointed for them. Hence said Abraham's servant, Gen. xxiv. 44. 'Let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed for my master's son.' That such a woman rather than any other, should be wife to such a man, is by the appointment of Heaven. Mens children are also decreed by God. Hence said Eve, Gen. iv. 24. 'God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.' And says the Psalmist, Psal. cxxvii. 3. 'Lo children are the heritage of the Lord.' God determines the numbers and names of every man's children.

(4.) All the comforts of mens lives are under the divine appointment, both those temporal and spiritual. Hence says the prophet, Isa. xxvi. 1. 'We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.'

5. All mens afflictions are determined by a decree of Heaven, Micah vi. 9. 'Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.' Such are public calamities and distresses, as war, famine and pestilence, all bodily pains and sickness, poverties and pinching straits, and whatever is grievous and afflictive to men. None of these spring out of the dust, or come by chance. The kind and nature of people's troubles, their measure and degree, time and season, continuance and dura-

tion, and all the circumstances of them, are determined, and weighed in the scale of his eternal counsel. Hence says the apostle, 1 Thess. iii. 3. 'No man should be moved by these afflictions: for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.'

(6.) The time of every man's life in the world is appointed. Hence says Job, chap. vii. 1. 'Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?' And says the same great man, chap. xiv. 5. 'His days are determined; and the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.' The term of our life is fixed and limited, our days are determined, and our months numbered. Hence David prays, Psal. xxxix. 4. 'Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.' Our days are measured; they are as the days of an hireling. As the hireling hath a set time to work in, so every man and woman hath an appointed time for acting and working in this world. We are all pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and in a little time we must go hence and be no more. We are here like men upon a stage to act our parts, and in a short time we must retire within the curtain of death, and others will come in our room. Our glass is continually running, and the day and hour in which it will run out is settled and fixed by the order of Heaven. We find in scripture that God hath often foretold the precise term of particular men's lives. He set a hundred and twenty years to those who lived in the old world before the flood came upon them, Gen. vi. 3. He foretold the time of Moses' life, of that of Jeroboam's son, of that of Ahaziah king of Israel, and of many others. All this was from his own decree and counsel.

Thirdly, God hath determined the eternal state of all his rational creatures, both men and angels. Our Confession of Faith tells us, agreeably to scripture, chap. iii. art. 3. that 'by the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others are fore-ordained to everlasting death.' More particularly,

1. We read of the elect angels, 1 Tim. v. 21. The perseverance and standing of the holy angels in the state of their primitive integrity, and their confirmation therein, was de-

terminated by the purpose of God. In the morning of the creation heaven shined with innumerable glittering stars, the angels of light, of whom a vast number are, by their rebellion against God, become wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Now, the good angels are in a supernatural state, without the least danger of change, or any separation from the blessed presence of God in glory, flowing from the continual irradiations of divine grace, which preserves their minds from errors, and their wills from irregular desires; and consequently they cannot sin, nor forfeit their felicity.

It was by an eternal decree of God, that he passed by the angels that fell, and doomed them to everlasting misery. The apostle tells us, 2 Pet. ii. 4. that 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved into judgment.' And saith Jude, ver. 6. 'The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.' Mercy did not interpose to avert or suspend their judgment; but immediately they were expelled from the Divine Presence. Their present misery is insupportable, and worse awaits them. Their judgment is irreversible; they are under the blackness of darkness for ever. They have not the least glimpse of hope to allay their sorrows, and no star-light to sweeten the horrors of their eternal night. It were a kind of mercy to them to be capable of death; but God will never be so far reconciled to them as to annihilate them. Immortality, which is the privilege of their nature, infinitely increases their torment.

2. God hath likewise appointed the final and eternal state of men and women. It is said, Rom. ix. 21, 22, 23. 'Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?'

(1.) He hath elected some to everlasting life by an irreversible decree, Rom. viii. 29, 30. 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his

Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Eph. i. 4. ' According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.' 2 Thess. ii. 13. ' God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.' From eternity God elected some from among the lost posterity of Adam to everlasting life and glory, according to the good pleasure of his own will. Therefore all is referred by our Saviour to the good pleasure of God, Matth. xi. 25, 26. And all the means for accomplishing the ends of election are likewise of divine appointment; particularly the redemption of ruined sinners by the death and sufferings of Christ : ' He hath chosen us in Christ,' Eph. i. 4. The Father did first, in order of nature, chuse Christ to the Mediatorial office, and as the chief corner-stone to bear up the whole building; whence he is called God's *elect*, Isa. xlii. 1. And then he chose a company of lost sinners to be saved by and through Christ; and therefore he is said to predestinate them to be conformed to the image of his Son.

2. God hath passed by the rest of mankind, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, and hath ordained them to dishonour and wrath for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice. Hence Christ is said to be ' a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient; wherunto also they were appointed,' 1 Pet. ii. 8. ' The foundation of God standeth sure; having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour,' 2 Tim. ii. 19, 20. In Jude, ver. 4. we read of ' ungodly men, who were before of old ordained to condemnation.' And in Rom. ix. 22, 23. we read of ' vessels of mercy; which God had afore prepared unto glory; and of vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.'

III. I come to consider the end of God's decrees. And this is no other than his own glory. Every rational agent acts for an end; and God being the most perfect agent, and

his glory the highest end, there can be no doubt but all his decrees are directed to that end. 'For—to him are all things,' Rom. xi. 36. 'That we should be to the praise of his glory,' Eph. i. 12. In all, he aims at his glory; and seeing he aims at it, he gets it even from the most sinful actions he has decreed to permit. Either the glory of his mercy or of his justice he draws therefrom. Infinite wisdom directs all to the end intended. More particularly,

1. This was God's end in the creation of the world. The divine perfections are admirably glorified here, not only in regard of the greatness of the effect, which comprehends the heavens and the earth, and all things therein; but in regard of the marvellous way of its production. For he made the vast universe without the concurrence of any material cause; he brought it forth from the womb of nothing by an act of his efficacious will. And as he began the creation by proceeding from nothing to real existence, so in forming the other parts he drew them from infirm and indisposed matter, as from a second nothing, that all his creatures might bear the signatures of infinite power. Thus he commanded light to arise out of darkness, and sensible creatures from an insensible element. The lustre of the divine glory appears eminently here. Hence says David, Psal. xix. 1. 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' They declare and manifest to the world the attributes and perfections of their great Creator, even in his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. All the creatures have some prints of God stamped upon them, whereby they loudly proclaim and shew to the world his wisdom and goodness in framing them. Hence says Paul, Rom. i. 20. 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.'

2. The glory of God was his chief end and design in making men and angels. The rest of the creatures glorified God in an objective way, as they are evidences and manifestations of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. But this higher rank of beings are endued with rational faculties, and so are capable to glorify God actively. Hence it is said, Prov. xvi. 4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself.' If all things were made for him, then man and angels especially, who are the master-pieces of the whole creation. We have our rise and being from the pure fountain of God's infinite

power and goodness; and therefore we ought to run towards that again, till we empty all our faculties and excellencies into that same ocean of divine goodness.

3. This is likewise the end of election and predestination. For 'he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, to the praise of the glory of his grace.' That some are ordained to eternal life, and others passed by, and suffered to perish eternally in their sin, is for the manifestation of the infinite perfections and excellencies of God. The glory and beauty of the divine attributes is displayed here with a shining lustre; as his sovereign authority and dominion over all his creatures to dispose of them to what ends and purposes he pleaseth; his knowledge and omniscience, in beholding all things past, present, and to come; his vindictive justice, in ordaining punishments to men, as a just retribution for sin; and his omnipotence, in making good his word, and putting all his threatenings in execution: The glory of his goodness shines likewise here, in making choice of any, when all most justly deserved to be rejected. And his mercy shines here with an amiable lustre, in receiving and admitting all who believe in Jesus into his favour.

4. This was the end that God proposed in that great and astonishing work of redemption. In our redemption by Christ we have the fullest, clearest, and most delightful manifestation of the glory of God that ever was or shall be in this life. All the declarations and manifestations that we have of his glory in the works of creation and common providence, are but dim and obscure in comparison with what is here, indeed the glory of his wisdom, power, and goodness, is clearly manifested in the works of creation. But the glory of his mercy and love had lain under an eternal eclipse without a Redeemer. God had in several ages of the world pitched upon particular seasons to manifest and discover one or other particular property of his nature. Thus his justice was declared in his drowning the old world with a deluge of water, and burning Sodom with fire from heaven. His truth and power were clearly manifested in freeing the Israelites from the Egyptian chains, and bringing them out from that miserable bondage. His truth was there illustriously displayed in performing a promise which had lain dormant for the space of 430 years, and his power in quelling his implacable enemies by the meanest of his creatures. Again, the glory

of one attribute is more seen in one work than in another: in some things there is more of his goodness, in other things more of his wisdom is seen, and in others more of his power. But in the work of redemption all his perfections and excellencies shine forth in their greatest glory. And this is the end that God proposed in their conversion and regeneration. Hence it is said, Isa. xliii. 21. 'This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.' Sinners are adopted into God's family, and made a royal priesthood on this very design,' 1 Pet. ii. 9.

IV. I come now to consider the properties of God's decrees.

1. They are eternal. God makes no decrees in time, but they were all from eternity. So the decree of election is said to have been 'before the foundation of the world,' Eph. i. 4. Yea whatever he doth in time, was decreed by him, seeing it was known to him before time,' Acts xv. 18. 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.' And this foreknowledge is founded on the decree. If the divine decrees were not eternal, God would not be most perfect and unchangeable, but, like weak man, should take new counsels, and would be unable to tell every thing that were to come to pass.

2. They are most wise, 'according to the counsel of his will.' God cannot properly deliberate or take counsel, as men do; for he sees all things together and at once. And thus his decrees are made with perfect judgment, and laid in the depth of wisdom, Rom. xi. 33. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' So that nothing is determined that could have been better determined.

3. They are most free, *according to the counsel of his own will*; depending on no other, but all flowing from the mere pleasure of his own will, Rom. xi. 34. 'For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?' Whatsoever he decreeth to work without himself, is from his free choice. So his decrees are all absolute, and there are none of them conditional. He has made no decrees suspended on any condition without himself. Neither has he decreed any thing because he saw it would come to pass, or as that which would come to pass on such or such conditions; for then they should be no more accord-

ing to the counsel of his will, but the creature's will. For God's decrees being eternal, cannot depend upon a condition which is temporal. They are the determinate counsels of God, but a conditional decree determines nothing. Such conditional decrees are inconsistent with the infinite wisdom of God, and are in men only the effects of weakness; and they are inconsistent with the independency of God, making them depend on the creature.

4. They are unchangeable. They are the unalterable laws of heaven. God's decrees are constant; and he by no means alters his purpose, as men do, Psal. xxxiii. 11. 'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.' Hence they are compared to mountains of brass, Zech. vi. 1. As nothing can escape his first view, so nothing can be added to his knowledge. Hence Balaam said, 'God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Numb. xxiii. 19. The decree of election is irreversible: 'The foundation of God, (says the apostle), standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his,' 2 Tim. ii. 19.

5. They are most holy and pure. For as the sun darts its beams upon a dunghill, and yet is no way defiled by it; so God decrees the permission of sin, as above explained, yet is not the author of sin: 1 John i. 5. 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,' Jam. i. 13, 17. 'God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

6. *Lastly*, They are effectual; that is, whatsoever God decrees comes to pass infallibly, Isa. xlvi. 10. 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.' He cannot fall short of what he has determined. Yet the liberty of second causes is not hereby taken away; for the decree of God offers no violence to the creature's will; as appears from the free and unforced actings of Joseph's brethren, Pharaoh, the Jews that crucified Christ, &c. Nor does it take away the contingency of second causes, either in themselves or as to us, as appears by the lot cast into the lap. Nay, they are thereby established, because he hath efficaciously fore-ordained that such effects shall follow on such causes.

Before proceeding to the application of this doctrine, it

may not be improper to answer some objections which are brought against the doctrine of the divine decrees.

1. It is objected by some, that if all things that come to pass in time be appointed of God by an irreversible decree, then this seems to make God the author of sin, as if he had ordained that horrid and hateful evil to come into the world, which is so dishonourable to himself, and so destructive to the children of men. In answer to this, you would know,

1. That all sinful actions fall under the divine decree. Though sin itself flows from transgressing the law, yet the futuration of it is from the decree of God. No such thing could ever have been in the world, if it had not been determined by the eternal counsel of Heaven for a holy and just end. This is plainly asserted by the apostle Peter, with respect to the greatest villainy that was ever committed on the earth, namely, the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the hands of sinful men, Acts ii. 23. forecited. And the church gives this account of it, Acts iv. 27, 28. 'For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand, and thy counsel determined before to be done.' There was never such an atrocious crime or higher act of wickedness committed, than the murdering of the Lord of glory. And yet it appears from these texts of scripture, that, in this bloody and horrid scene, wicked men did no more than God's hand and counsel determined before to be done.

2. That the decree of God is properly distinguished into that which is effective, and that which is permissive.

(1.) His effective decree respects all the good that comes to pass, whether it be moral or natural goodness. All the actions and motions of the creatures have a natural goodness in them; and even sinful actions considered abstractly from any irregularity, obliquity, or deformity cleaving to them, have a natural goodness in them, so far as they are actions: they have a goodness of being considered purely and simply as actions. Now, God has decreed to effect all these, yea even sinful actions considered purely as natural. For he is the first and universal cause of all things, the fountain and original of all good. And it is said with

respect to the oppressions of the church by wicked men, *Psalm cxv. 3.* 'Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased.'

(2.) His permissive decree doth only respect the irregularity and pravity that is in sinful actions. God decreed to permit the same, or he determined it to be, himself permitting it. Hence it is said, *Acts xiv. 16.* 'In times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.' And God doth nothing in time, but what he did from eternity decree to do. So that the futuration of sin is from the decree of God. God determined that it should be. He did not decree to have any efficiency in sin, considered as such; but he willed that it should be done, himself permitting it. The counsel of God did not determine to do it, but that it should be done.

3. God decreed the permission of sin for great and glorious ends. It is true, sin in its own nature has no tendency to any good end. If it end in any good, it is from the overruling providence of God, and that infinite divine skill that can bring good out of evil, as well as light out of darkness. Now, the great and glorious end for which God decreed the after-being of sin, is his own glory: and the ends subordinate thereunto are not a few. Particularly, God decreed the futuration of sin, (1.) That he might have occasion of glorifying his infinite wisdom, love, and grace in the redemption and salvation of a company of lost sinners through the death and sufferings of his own dear Son. (2.) That his patience and long suffering in bearing with and forbearing sinners, might be magnified, admired, and adored. (3.) That he might be honoured and glorified by the faith and repentance of his people, and their walking humbly with him. (4.) That his justice might be illustriously displayed and glorified in the eternal damnation of reprobate sinners for their own sins and abominations, sin being the cause of their damnation, though not of their reprobation. Thus God decreed the futuration of sin for these holy and wise ends, that he might glorify his wisdom in bringing good out of so great an evil, and a greater good than the evil he decreed to permit.

4. The decree of God about the permission of sin does not infringe the liberty of man's will. For sin doth not follow the decree by a necessity of co-action or compulsion,

which indeed would destroy human liberty; but by a necessity of infallibility, which is very consistent with it. It is sufficient unto human liberty, or the freedom of man's will, that a man act without all constraint, and out of choice. Now, this is not taken away by the decree. Men sin as freely as if there were no decree, and yet as infallibly as if there were no liberty. And men sin, not to fulfil God's decree, which is hid from them, but to serve and gratify their vile lusts and corrupt affections.

Object. 2. If God hath determined the precise number of every man's days by an unalterable decree, then the use of means for the preservation of our health and lives is altogether unnecessary; for nothing can frustrate the divine decree. We will certainly live as long as God hath appointed us, whether we use any means or not. And therefore when we are hungry, we need not eat and drink; and when we are sick, we need not take physic, or use any medicines.

In answer to this, you would know, that as God hath decreed the end, so he hath decreed the means that are proper for attaining that end; so that these two must not be separated. Though God hath decreed how long we shall live, yet seeing it is his ordinary way to work by means, and he hath commanded and enjoined the use of them to men, therefore it is still our duty to use lawful means for preserving our life and health, and to wait on God in the due use of them, referring the event to his wise determination. In Paul's dangerous voyage to Rome, an angel of the Lord assured him, that God had given him all that sailed with him in the ship; and Paul assured them from the Lord, that there should be no loss of any of their lives: yet when some were about to flee out of the ship, he says to the centurion who had the command, 'Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved,' Acts xxvii. 31. And he exhorted them to take some meat after their long abstinence, telling them, that it was for their health. From which it plainly appears, that as God had decreed to save their lives, so he had decreed to save them in the due use of ordinary means; so that they were to use means for the preservation of their life and health. And when Hezekiah was recovered from a mortal disease, and received a promise from God that he should have fifteen years added to his days, and the promise was confirmed by a sign, the miraculous going back of the sun, he did not ne-

glect or cast off the use of means; but, as was prescribed by the prophet, he applied a bunch of dry figs to his sore, and used still his ordinary diet. Therefore it is gross ignorance and madness in men to reason so against God's decrees. The Lord, by an unchangeable counsel and purpose, hath decreed and set down all things, and how they shall come to pass; and therefore it is a wrong way of arguing for people to say, If God hath determined how long I shall live, then I shall not die sooner, though I never eat or drink.

Object. 3. If God hath determined the eternal state and condition of men, whether they shall be happy or miserable for ever, then it is in vain to repent and believe, or use any means for their own safety. For if God hath elected them to salvation, they shall certainly be saved, whether they use any means or not; and if they are not elected to everlasting life, all that they can possibly do will be to no purpose at all, for they shall never be saved by it.

For answer to this, you would know,

1. That God's decree of election is a great secret, which we ought not to pry into. It is simply impossible for men to know whether they are elected or not, before they believe. Indeed, if a man were certain that he is not elected to eternal life, it would be another case: but as it is not certain that thou art elected, so it is not certain that thou art not elected. You have no means to know either the one or the other certainly, till you get saving faith. Till then the Lord reserves it in his own breast, as a secret which we are not to pry into. For it is said, Deut. xxix. 29. 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children, that we may do all the things of his law.' Here the Lord shews what belongs to him and what belongs to us, and that we should mind our duty, and not busy and perplex ourselves about impertinencies. Whether men be elected or not elected, is a secret that God never discloses to an unbeliever; but that we should believe on Christ is no secret. This is a duty clearly revealed and enjoined by the gospel.

2. It is our duty to look to God's commands, and not to his decrees; to our own duty, and not to his purposes. The decrees of God are a vast ocean, into which many possibly have curiously pried to their own horror and despair; but few or none have ever pried into them to their own profit

and satisfaction. Our election is not written in particular in the word of God; but our duty is plainly set down there. If men conscientiously perform their duty, this is the way to come to the knowledge of their election. Men therefore should not question whether they be elected or not, but first believe on Christ, and endeavour diligently to work out their own salvation; and if their works be good, and their obedience true, thereby they will come to a certain knowledge that they were elected and set apart to everlasting life.

3. As God elects to the end, so he elects also to the means. Now, faith and obedience are the means and way to salvation; and therefore, if you be elected to salvation, you are also elected to faith and obedience. See what is said to this purpose, 2 Thess. ii. 13. 'God hath chosen you to salvation,' there is the end; 'through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,' there is the means which lead to that end. Both are decreed by God. If therefore you heartily and sincerely believe and obey, then your election to salvation stands firm and sure. Nay, further, the scriptures make election to be terminated as well in obedience as salvation. So 1 Pet. i. 2. 'Elect (says the apostle) unto obedience, through sanctification of the Spirit.' In the former place it was, 'elect to salvation through sanctification;' but here it is, 'elect to obedience through sanctification;' to denote unto us, that none are elected unto salvation but those that are elected unto obedience. And therefore it is unreasonable, yea, it is contradictory to say, if I am elected, I shall be saved, whether I believe and obey or not; for none are elected to salvation but through faith and obedience.

4. Men do not pry into the decrees of God in other things, but do what they know to be incumbent upon them as their duty. And certainly it is as unreasonable here. When you are dangerously sick, and the physician tells you, that unless you take such and such medicines, your case is desperate; you do not use to reason thus, Then if God hath decreed my recovery, I will certainly be restored to my health, whether I take that course of physic or not; but you presently fall in with the advice given you, and make use of the means prescribed for your health. And will you not do so here? You are dangerously sick and mortally wounded with sin, and God commands you to flee to Christ the only physician that can cure you, and cast yourselves upon him, and you shall

certainly be saved. But O, says the sinner, if I knew that God had decreed my salvation, I would venture on Christ ; but till once I know this, I must not believe : O how unreasonable is unbelief ! The devil's suggestions make poor creatures act as if they were entirely distracted and out of their wits. This is just as if an Israelite stung with the fiery serpents should have said, If I knew that the Lord had decreed my cure, I would look upon the brazen serpent, and if he hath decreed it, I will certainly recover whether I look to it or not. If all the stung Israelites had been thus resolved, it is likely they had all perished. Or this is as if one pursued by the avenger of blood, should have set himself down in the way to the city of refuge, where he should have been flying for his life, and said, If God hath decreed my escape, then I will be safe whether I run to the city of refuge or not ; but if he hath not decreed it, then it is in vain for me to go thither. Now, would not men count this a wilful casting away of his life, with a careless neglect of that provision which God had made to save it ? Was it not sufficient that a way was made for his escape, and a way feasible enough, the city of refuge being always open ? Thus the arms of Christ are always open to receive and embrace poor humbled perishing sinners fleeing to him for help. And will men destroy themselves by suffering Satan to entangle them with a needless, impertinent, and unreasonable scruple ? In other cases, if there be no way but one, and any encouraging probability to draw men in to it, they run into it without delay, not perplexing and discouraging themselves with the decrees of God. Now, this is thy case, O sinner ; Christ is the way, the truth, and the life ; there is no other by whom you can be saved ; flee to him then as for thy life ; and let not Satan hinder thee, by diverting thee to impossibilities and imper tinencies. Comply with the call and offer of the gospel. This is present and pertinent duty, and trouble not thyself about the secrets of God,

I conclude all with a few inferences.

1. Has God decreed all things that come to pass ? Then there is nothing that falls out by chance, nor are we to ascribe what we meet with either to good or ill luck and fortune. There are many events in the world which men look upon as mere accidents, yet all these come by the counsel and appointment of Heaven. Solomon tells us, Prov. xvi. 33. that

‘the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is from the Lord.’ However casual and fortuitous things may be with respect to us, yet they are all determined and directed by the Lord. When that man drew a bow at a venture, 1 Kings xxii. 34. it was merely accidental with respect to him, yet it was God that guided the motion of the arrow so as to smite the king of Israel rather than any other man. Nothing then comes to pass, however casual and uncertain it may seem to be, but what was decreed by God.

2. Hence we see God’s certain knowledge of all things that happen in the world, seeing his knowledge is founded on his decree. As he sees all things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees all things to come in the glass of his own will; of his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; and of his permitting will, if he hath decreed to suffer them. Hence his declaration of things to come is founded on his appointing them, Isa. xlv. 7. ‘Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming and shall come? let them shew unto them.’ He foreknows the most necessary things according to the course of nature, because he decreed that such effects should proceed from and necessarily follow such and such causes: and he knows all future contingents, all things which shall fall out by chance, and the most free actions of rational creatures, because he decreed that such things should come to pass contingently or freely, according to the nature of second causes. So that what is casual or contingent with respect to us, is certain and necessary in regard of God.

3. Whoever be the instruments of any good to us, of whatever sort, we must look above them, and eye the hand and counsel of God in it, which is the first spring, and be duly thankful to God for it. And whatever evil of crosses or afflictions befalls us, we must look above the instruments of it to God. Affliction doth not rise out of the dust, or come to men by chance; but it is the Lord that sends it, and we should own and reverence his hand in it. So did David in the day of his extreme distress. 2 Sam. xvi. 11. ‘Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him.’ We should be patient under whatever distress befalls us, considering that God is our party, Job ii. 10. ‘Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?’

This would be a happy means to still our quarrelings at adverse dispensations. Hence David says, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,' Psal. xxxix. 9.

4. See here the evil of murmuring and complaining at our lot in the world. How apt are ye to quarrel with God, as if he were in the wrong to you, when his dealings with you are not according to your own desires and wishes? You demand a reason, and call God to an account, Why am I thus? why so much afflicted and distressed? why so long afflicted? and why such an affliction rather than another? why am I so poor and another so rich? Thus your hearts rise up against God. But you should remember, that this is to defame the counsels of infinite wisdom, as if God had not ordered your affairs wisely enough in his eternal counsel. We find the Lord reproving Job for this, chap. xl. 2. 'shall he that contendeth with the Lord instruct him?' When ye murmur and repine under cross and afflictive dispensations, this is a presuming to instruct God how to deal with you, and to reprove him as if he were in the wrong. Yea, there is a kind of implicit blasphemy in it, as if you had more wisdom and justice to dispose of your lot, and to carve out your own portion in the world. This is upon the matter the language of such a disposition, Had I been on God's counsel, I had ordered this matter better; things had not been with me as now they are. O presume not to correct the infinite wisdom of God, seeing he has decreed all things most wisely and judiciously.

5. There is no reason for people to excuse their sins and falls, from the doctrine of the divine decrees. Wicked men, when they commit some villainy or atrocious crime, are apt to plead thus for their excuse, Who can help it? God would have it so; it was appointed for me before I was born, so that I could not avoid it. This is a horrid abuse of the divine decrees, as if they did constrain men to sin: Whereas the decree is an immanent act of God, and so can have no influence, physical or moral, upon the wills of men, but leaves them to the liberty and free choice of their own hearts; and what sinners do, they do most freely and of choice. It is a horrid and detestable wickedness to cast the blame of your sin upon God's decree. This is to charge your villainy upon him, as if he were the author of it. It

is great folly to cast your sins upon Satan who tempted you, or upon your neighbour who provoked you; but it is a far greater sin, nay horrid blasphemy, to cast it upon God himself. A greater affront than this cannot be offered to the infinite holiness of God.

6. *Lastly*, Let the people of God comfort themselves in all cases by this doctrine of the divine decrees; and, amidst whatever befalls them, rest quietly and submissively in the bosom of God, considering that whatever comes or can come to pass, proceeds from the decree of their gracious friend and reconciled Father, who knows what is best for them, and will make all things work together for their good. O what a sweet and pleasant life would ye have under the heaviest pressures of affliction, and what heavenly serenity and tranquillity of mind would you enjoy, would you cheerfully acquiesce in the good will and pleasure of God, and embrace every dispensation, how sharp soever it may be, because it is determined and appointed for you by the eternal counsel of his will!

OF THE WORK OF CREATION.

HEB. xi. 3.—*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

HAVING discoursed to you of the decrees of God, whereby he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, I come now to treat of the execution of these decrees. That question, ‘How doth God execute his decrees?’ being only an introduction to what follows, it is needless to insist on it. Only you would know, that for God to execute his decrees, is to bring to pass what he has decreed. Now, what God from all eternity decreed is brought to pass in the works of creation and providence. Nothing falls out in either of these but what was decreed; nor does it fall out in any other way than as it was decreed. The decrees of God are as it were the scheme, draught and pattern of the house; and the works of creation and providence are the house, built in every point conformable to the draught.

In the text we have an answer to that question, ‘What is the work of creation?’ Wherein, we may consider,

1. What we understand about it. (1.) The making of the world; it was *framed*, and had a beginning, not being from eternity. (2.) The author and efficient cause of it, God. (3.) What God made, *the worlds*; all things, heaven, earth, sea, air, &c. and all the inhabitants thereof, angels, men, cattle, fowls, fishes, &c. (4.) How they were made, *by the word of God*, that word of power which spake all things, into being. Or it may denote Jesus Christ, who is called *the word of God*, and by whom God *made the worlds*. (5.) Whereof they were made. This is declared negatively, *Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*, that is, not of pre-existent matter, but of nothing. By *things that are seen* may be understood visible corporeal things; and if these were made of nothing, much more things that are not seen. But I rather understand it of all things which are seen to have a being; for that word relates to the eyes of the understanding, as well as of the body.

2. How we understand this creation of the world, *through faith*. Not that we can understand nothing of the creation by the light of nature; for the eternity of the world is contrary to reason as well as faith: but we have the full and certain knowledge of this work of creation in the particular circumstances of it, through faith assenting to divine revelation, and no other way,

In speaking to this work of creation I shall shew,

- I. What we are to understand by creation.
- II. That the world was made, or had a beginning.
- III. Who made it.
- IV. What God made.
- V. Whereof all things were made.
- VI. How they were made.
- VII. In what space of time they were made.
- VIII. For what end God made all things.
- IX. In what case or condition he made them.
- X. Deduce some inferences from the whole.

I. I am to shew what we are to understand by creation, or what it is to create.

1. It is not to be taken here in a large sense, as sometimes it is used in scripture, for any production of things wherein second causes have their instrumentality; as when it is said, *Psalm civ. 30. 'Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.'* Where the

meaning is, thou sendest forth thy quickening power, which produceth life in the creatures from time to time: for the Psalmist speaks not here of the first creation, but of the continued and repeated production of living creatures, in which the divine power is the principal agent. But,

2. We are to take it strictly, for the production of things out of nothing, or the giving a being to things which had none before. And here you would know, that there is a twofold creation, one immediate, and the other mediate.

(1.) There is an immediate creation; as when things are brought forth out of pure nothing, where there was no pre-existent master to work upon. Thus the heavens, the earth, the waters, and all the materials of inferior bodies, were made of nothing; and the souls of men are still produced from the womb of nothing by God's creative power, and infused into their bodies immediately by him, when they are fully organised to receive them.

(2.) There is a secondary and mediate creation, which is the making things of pre-existing matter, but of such as is naturally unfit and altogether indisposed for such productions, and which could never by any power of second causes be brought into such a form. Thus all beasts, cattle, and creeping things, and the body of man, were at first made of the earth, and the dust of the ground; and the body of the first woman was made of a rib taken out of the man. Now, this was a creation as well as the former; because, though there was matter here to work upon, yet it could never have been reduced into such a form without the efficacy of Almighty power. We have an account of both these in the history of the creation. It is said, Gen. i. 1. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;' *i. e.* he made that mighty mass of matter out of nothing, which was at first a rude and indigested lump; for the earth was without form, and the heavens without light. And then by that same omnipotent power he reduced it into that beautiful order and disposition wherein it now appears to our view.

II. I go on to shew that the world was made, that it had a beginning, and was not eternal. This the scripture plainly testifies, Gen. i. 1. above quoted. And this reason itself teacheth; for whatsoever is eternal, the being of it is necessary, and it is subject to no alteration. But we see this is not the case with the world; for it is daily undergoing alterations.

III. I am next to shew who made the world, and gave it a beginning. That was God and he only, Gen. i. 1. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' This will evidently appear from the following particulars.

1. The world could not make itself; for this would imply a horrid contradiction, namely, that the world was before it was; for the cause must always be before its effect. That which is not in being, can have no production; for nothing can act before it exists. As nothing hath no existence, so it hath no operation. There must therefore be something of real existence, to give a being to those things that are; and every second cause must be an effect of some other before it be a cause. To be and not to be at the same time, is a manifest contradiction, which would infallibly take place if any thing made itself. That which makes is always before that which is made, as is obvious to the most illiterate peasant. If the world were a creator, it must be before itself as a creature.

2. The production of the world could not be by chance. It was indeed the extravagant fancy of some ancient philosophers, that the original of the world was from a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which were in perpetual motion in an immense space, till at last a sufficient number of them met in such a happy conjunction as formed the universe in the beautiful order in which we now behold it. But it is amazingly strange how such a wild opinion, which can never be reconciled with reason, could ever find any entertainment in a human mind. Can any man rationally conceive, that a confused rout of atoms, of diverse natures and forms, and some so far distant from others, should ever meet in such a fortunate manner, as to form an entire world, so vast in the bigness, so distinct in the order, so united in the diversities of natures, so regular in the variety of changes, and so beautiful in the whole composure? Such an extravagant fancy as this can only possess the thoughts of a disordered brain.

3. God created all things, the world, and all the creatures that belong to it. He attributes this work to himself, as one of the peculiar glories of his Deity, exclusive of all the creatures. So we read, Isa. xlv. 24. 'I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.' Chap. xlv. 12. 'I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my

hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. Chap. xl. 12, 13. 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Job ix. 8, 'Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. These are magnificent descriptions of the creating power of God, and exceed every thing of the kind that hath been attempted by the pens of the greatest sages of antiquity.—By this operation God is distinguished from all the false gods and fictitious deities which the blinded nations adored, and shews himself to be the true God. Jer. x. 11. 12. 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.' Psal. xcvi. 5. 'All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens.' Isa. xxxvii. 19. "Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.' None could make the world but God, because creation is a work of infinite power, and could not be produced by any finite cause: For the distance between being and not being is truly infinite, which could not be removed by any finite agent, or the activity of all finite agents united.

This work of creation is common to all the three persons in the adorable Trinity. The Father is described in scripture as the Creator, 1 Cor. viii. 6.—'The Father, of whom are all things.' The same prerogative belongs to the Son, John i. 3. 'All things were made by him (the Word, the Son); and without him was not any thing made that was made.' The same honour belongs to the Holy Ghost, as Job xxvi. 13. 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.' Chap. xxxiii. 4. 'The Spirit of God hath made me (says Elihu), and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.' All the three persons are one God; God is the Creator; and therefore all the external works and acts of the one God must be common to the three persons. Hence, when the work of creation is ascribed to the Father, neither the Son nor the

Holy Spirit are excluded; but because, as the Father is the fountain of the Deity, so he is the fountain of divine works. The Father created from himself by the Son and the Spirit; the Son from the Father by the Spirit; and the Spirit from the Father and the Son; the manner or order of their working being according to the order of their subsisting. The matter may be conceived thus: All the three persons being one God, possessed of the same infinite perfections; the Father, the first in subsistence, willed the work of creation to be done by his authority; 'He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.'—In respect of immediate operation, it peculiarly belonged to the Son. For 'the Father created all things by Jesus Christ,' Eph. iii. 9. And we are told, that 'all things were made by him,' John iii. 3. This work in regard of disposition and ornament, doth peculiarly belong to the Holy Ghost. So it is said, Gen. i. 2. 'The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,' to garnish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed. Thus it is also said, Job xxvi. 13. above cited, 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.'

IV. Our next province is to shew what God made. All things whatsoever, besides God, were created, Rev. iv. 11. 'Thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.' Col. i. 16. 'By him were all things created.' The evil of sin is no positive being, being but a defect or want, and therefore is not reckoned among the things which God made, but owes its existence to the will of fallen angels and men. Devils being angels, are God's creatures; but God did not make them evil, or devils, but they made themselves so.

Those things that were made in the beginning were most properly created of God; but whatsoever is or will be produced in the world, is still made by God, not only in respect that the matter whereof they are made was created by him, but because he is still the first cause of all things, without whom second causes could produce nothing; and whatever power one creature has of producing another, is from God. Hence Elihu says, as above cited, 'The Spirit of God hath made me;' though he was produced by the operation of second causes. And it is worth while to consider what David says on this head, Psal. cxxxix. 13,—16. This clearly appears from the impotency of the creature to

produce any thing according to nature, when God denies his concurrence. Hence we have a chain of causes described, Hos. ii. 21, 22. where God is the first cause, and acts the same part in all other operations wherein creatures are concerned: 'I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.' If it be asked, then, what did God make? I answer, he made every thing that has a being, this stately structure of the universe, and that vast variety of creatures that are in it, sin only excepted, which he permitted should take place, but had no hand in the effecting of it as such.

V. I proceed to shew of what all things were made. Of nothing; which doth not denote any matter of which they were formed, but the term from which God brought them; when they had no being, he gave them one. There was no pre-existent matter to make them of, nothing at all to work upon: for he 'made all things both visible and invisible,' Col. i. 16. Rom. xi. 36. If then he made all things, he must needs have made them of nothing, unless he would say there was, besides God, something before there was any thing, which is a palpable contradiction. To create is properly to make a thing of nothing, to make a thing have an existence that had none before. Thus were the heavens and the earth made of nothing simply; that is, they began to exist, which they never did before. This is what is called immediate creation, as I shewed on the first head. But there is a mediate creation, as I also noticed, which is a producing of things from matter altogether unfit for the work, and which could never be disposed, but by an almighty power to be such a thing. Thus man's body was created of the dust, and this itself was created of nothing, and was utterly unfit for producing such a work without a superior agency.

VI. The sixth head is to shew, how all things were made of nothing, By the word of God's power. It was the infinite power of God that gave them a being; which power was exerted in his word, not a word properly spoken, but an act of his will commanding them to be, Gen. i. 3. God, said, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' Psal. xxxiii. 6, 9. 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood

fast.' By his powerful word he called them from nothing to being, Rom. iv. 17. 'God calleth those things which be not as though they were.' This is a notable evidence of infinite power, which with so great easiness as the speaking of a word, could raise up this glorious fabric of the world. An heathen philosopher considered this as a striking instance of the sublime, peculiar to the books of the Jewish legislator.

VII. Our next business is to shew in what space of time the world was created. It was not done in a moment, but in the space of six days, as is clear from the narrative of Moses. It was as easy for God to have done it in one moment as in six days. But this method he took, that we might have that wisdom, goodness, and power that appeared in the work, distinctly before our eyes, and be stirred up to a particular and distinct consideration of these works, for commemoration of which a seventh day is appointed a sabbath of rest.

But although God did not make all things in one moment, yet we are to believe, that every particular work was done in a moment, seeing it was done by a word, or an act of the divine will, Psal. xxxiii. 9. forecited. No sooner was the divine will intimated, than the thing willed instantly took place.

In the space of these six days the angels were created; and it is not to be thought that they were brought into being before that period; for the scripture expressly asserts, that all things were created in that space, Exod. xx. 11. And though Moses, Gen. i. makes no express mention of the angels, yet, Gen. ii. 1. he shews that they were created in one of these six days, as he mentions the host of the heavens and the earth; and it is certain, that in the host of heaven the angels are included, 1 Kings xxii. 19. where Micaiah the prophet says, 'I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven (which can be no other than the angels) standing by him.'

The works of the first day were, (1.) The highest heaven, the seat of the blessed, and that with the angels its inhabitants, who in Job xxxviii. 4,—7. under the designation of 'morning-stars and sons of God,' are said to have 'sang together, and shouted for joy,' when the foundations of the earth were laid, as being then made. (2.) The earth,

that is, the mass of earth and water, which Moses says was without form and void; that is, without that beauty and order which it afterwards received, and destitute of inhabitants, and without furniture and use. (3.) The light, which was afterwards gathered together, and distributed into the body of the sun and stars.

The works of the second day were the firmament; that is, that expansion or vast space which extends itself from the surface of the earth to the utmost extremity of the visible heavens, which ver. 8. is called *heaven*, that is, the aerial heavens, the habitation of birds and fowls, through which they wing their way. This vast extension is called the *firmament*, because it is fixed in its proper place, without which it cannot be removed without force and violence. Another work of this day was the dividing of the waters above the firmament, that is, the clouds, from the waters as yet mixed with the earth, which were afterwards gathered together into seas, rivers, lakes, fountains, &c.

On the third day, the lower waters were gathered into certain hollow places, which formed the sea; and the dry land appeared, adorned with plants, trees, and herbs, which continue to be produced to this day.

On the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars were made, to enlighten the world, and render it a beautiful place, which otherwise would have been an uncomfortable dungeon, and to distinguish the four seasons of the year.

On the fifth day, the fishes and fowls were made.

On the sixth day, all sorts of beasts, tame and wild, and creeping things were produced out of the earth; and last of all, man, male and female.

It is probable that the world was created in autumn, that season of the year in which generally things are brought to perfection for the use of man and beast. But this not being an article of faith, we need not insist upon it.

VIII. I come now to shew for what end God made all things. It was for his own glory, Prov. xvi. 4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself,' Rom. xi. 36. 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' And there are these three attributes of God that especially shine forth in this work of creation, namely, his wisdom, power, and goodness.

1. His wisdom eminently appears, (1.) In that after the

heavens and their inhabitants were created, those things that have only being and not life, then those that have being and life, but not sense, then those that have being, life, and sense, but not reason, and last of all, man, having being, life, sense, and reason, were successively formed. 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.' (2.) In his appointing of every thing to its proper use, by the law of creation, Gen. i. Hence the wisdom of God is celebrated in that work, Jer. x. 12. 'He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.'

2. The power of God appeared, (1.) In creating all things by a word, which instantly produced the effect intended. (2.) In that he created plants, herbs, and trees, before the sun, moon, and stars, which now naturally are the causes of the earth's producing its fruits; as also light before them, for discovering their beauty and verdure.

3. His goodness appears, in that he first prepared the place before he brought in the inhabitants, first provided the food before the living creatures were made, and adorned and fitted all for the use of man, before he formed him.

IX. If it is asked, In what state were all things made? I answer, They were all 'very good,' Gen. i. 31. The goodness of the creature consists in its fitness for the use for which it was made. In this respect every thing answered exactly the end of its creation. Again, the goodness of things is their perfection; and so every thing was made agreeable to the idea thereof that was formed in the divine mind. There was not the least blemish or defect in the work; but every thing was beautiful, as it was the effect of infinite wisdom as well as almighty power. And God being the end of all, even natural things tend to him, (1.) Declaring his glory in an objective way, Psal. xix. 1. (2.) Stirring us up to seek him, and behold him as our chief good and portion, Acts xvii. 26, 27. Rom. i. 20. (3.) Sustaining our life, and serving man, that he might serve God, for which he was made very fit, in regard of the rich endowments of his mind, all pure, holy, and upright, 1 Cor. x. 31. All the sin and misery that is now in the world, by which its beauty is greatly marred, its goodness defaced, and disorder and irregularity so universally prevail, proceeded from Satan, and man's yielding to his temptations.

I shall shut up this subject with a few inferences.

1. God is a most glorious being, infinitely lovely and desirable, possessed of every perfection and excellency. He made all things, and bestowed upon them all the perfections and amiable qualities with which they are invested. So that there is no perfection in any of the creatures which is not in him in an eminent way, Psal. xciv. 9. 'He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?' Whatever excellency and beauty is in the creatures, is all from him; and sure it must be most excellent in the fountain.

2. God's glory should be our chief end. And seeing whatever we have is from him, it should be used and employed for him: For 'all things were created by him and for him,' Col. i. 16. Have we a tongue? It should be employed for him, to shew forth his praise; hands? they should do and work for him; life? it should be employed in his service; talents and abilities? they should be laid out for promoting his interest and honour; and, upon a proper call, we should be ready to suffer for him.

3. God is our Sovereign Lord Proprietary, and may do in us, on us, and by us, what he will: Rom. ix. 20, 21. 'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?' There is no reason to murmur and fret under the cross, or any afflicting dispensations, that he exercises us with. Should he destroy that being that he gave us, to whom would he do wrong? As he gave it us freely, he may take it away, without any impeachment of his goodness and justice. May not God do with his own what he will?

4. We should use all the creatures we make use of with an eye to God, and due thankfulness to him, the giver; employing them for our use, and in our service, soberly and wisely, with hearts full of gratitude to our Divine Benefactor; considering they stand related to God as their Creator, and are the workmanship of his own hands. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, 1 Tim. iv. 4. They are not to be used to his dishonour, or the feeding of our base lusts, and irregular appetites, but to fit us for and strengthen us in the performance of our duty to him.

5. There is no case so desperate, but faith may get sure footing with respect to it in the power and word of God. Let the people of God be ever so low, they can never be lower than when they were not at all. Hence the Lord says, Isa. lrv. 18. 'Be glad and rejoice,' &c. He spoke a word and so the creature was made at first; and it will cost him but a word to make it over again. Hence Christ is called 'the beginning of the creation of God,' Rev. iii. 14. O seek to be new-made by him; that old things may pass away, and all things become new.

6. Give away yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, making an hearty, a cheerful, and an entire dedication and surrender of your souls and bodies, and all that ye are and have, to him as your God and Father, resolving to serve and obey him all the days of your life; that as he made you for his glory, you may in some measure answer the end of your creation, which is to shew forth his praise. Serve not sin or Satan any longer. God made you upright and holy; but Satan unmade you, stripping you of your highest glory and ornament. Relinquish his service, which is the basest drudgery and slavery, and will land all that are employed in it in hell at last; and engage in the service of God in Christ, which is truly honourable and glorious, and will be crowned with an everlasting reward in the other world: for where he is, there shall his servants also be.

7. Lastly, This doctrine affords a ground of love, peace, justice and mercy betwixt men, which should be carefully cultivated by all that would desire to be with God for ever. For says the prophet, Mal. ii. 10. 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?' The consideration of being created by God, should be a powerful inducement to us to practise all the duties we owe to one another as men and Christians.

OF THE CREATION OF MAN.

GEN. i. 27.—*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.*

HAVING discoursed of the creation of all things out of nothing, and exhibited some of the displays of the

admirable wisdom, power, and goodness of God apparent therein, I come now to speak of the creation of man, the masterpiece of the lower creation. In the text we have an answer to that question, 'How did God create man?' God only spake the word and then the other creatures were produced: but being to create man, he called a council of the Trinity for that end; whereby the excellency of man above the other creatures, who is a compend of the world, is clearly demonstrated. Here we have the execution of that council, *So God created man, &c.* For, as says Seneca, a heathen moralist, man is not a work huddled over in a haste, and done without great forethought and consideration; for man is the greatest and most stupendous work of God, even of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As the sacred historian had said before of the Creator, 'Let us make man in our image,' &c. so it is not for nought that he repeats the act of creating three times in this verse; in which also the *us* in the former verse is restrained to God; so that the plurality there spoken of is not God and angels, but the three persons, one God; for it was not angels, but God that created man. Man here signifies man and woman, male and female, Adam and Eve. Wherefore they are called *him* and *them*; for as they were originally one, God having made two of one by creation; so they two were made one again by marriage. And they were both made in one day, Gen. i. 26.—31.; and that in the image of God, which is twice repeated; the import whereof seems to be, that man was made very like God. Whereas there is but a shadow and vestige of him in the inferior creatures, as we may read the name and perfections of God in the least herb of the field; man was made so to represent God in his moral perfections as to imitate his virtues. Two things are here to be considered,

I. God's making man male and female.

II. His making man after his image.

I. Let us consider God's making man, male and female; that is, man and woman.

First, Adam was the male, and Eve the female. These were the common parents of all mankind, and there was no man in the world, before Adam. He is expressly called 'the first man,' 1 Cor. xv. 5. and Eve 'the mother of all living,' Gen. iii. 20. And hence it is said 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men,' Acts xvii. 26.

Secondly, Man consists of a soul and body, which being united constitute man; that is, man or woman. Here I shall consider, 1. The body; and, 2. The soul.

1. The body of the man. Man's body is a piece of most rare and curious workmanship, plainly indicating its divine Maker. In it there is a variety of members, none of them superfluous, but all adapted to the use assigned them by the wise Creator. The man's body, as Moses tells us, was formed of the dust of the ground, Gen. ii. 7. Hence he was called *Adam*, which signifies *red earth*; of which sort of virgin-earth man's body seems to have been made. The word rendered *dust*, signifies not dust simply, (says Zanchius), but clay, which is earth and water. This may teach us humility, and repress our pride, and particularly glorying in beauty or any external advantages of person, seeing we are sprung of no higher original than the earth upon which we tread; especially seeing, as we derived our first being from it, we must return to it again, there to abide till the resurrection-day.

2. The woman's body was formed of the man's, Gen. ii. 21, 22. of a rib of the man's side, but not a bare rib, but flesh on it, ver. 23. which was taken out of his side while he was in a deep sleep, into which God cast him; so that he felt no pain. And it is not improbable, that in that deep sleep God revealed to him what he himself afterwards declares concerning Eve, and marriage in general, ver. 23, 24. Whether Adam had more ribs than other men, is not determined. If he had, it was not superfluous to him as the origin of mankind, though it might be as a private person; and therefore Eve being made of it, there was no more use for it. If he had not more ribs than other men, yet he sustained no loss thereby, which was otherwise made up, ver. 21. either by a new rib, or hardening the flesh to the use of a rib. In this the wisdom of God doth illustriously appear.

(1.) The woman's body was made of nobler matter than the man's, to be some ballast to the man's excellency in respect of his sex, that he might not despise but honour her. The word rendered *made*, Gen. ii. 22, is in the Hebrew *built*. He made the man, but he built the woman, as a stately palace, or house, where all mankind draw their first breath.

(2.) It was made of the man's body, to teach man to love their wives as their own flesh.

(3.) It was not made out of man's head, to shew her that she is not to be her husband's mistress, nor usurp authority over him, 1 Tim. ii. 12.; nor out of his feet, to shew him that she is not to be his slave, to be trampled on by him; but out of his side, near his heart, to shew him that she must be treated as his companion, loved, nourished, and cherished by him.

(4.) *Lastly*, The mystery of the church drawing her life out of Christ's sleeping the sleep of death on the cross, Eph. v. seems to have been here intended and shadowed forth.

The bodies of both our first parents were far more beautiful, handsome, and graceful than our bodies are now. We are begot of men, but they were the immediate workmanship of God. The author being more excellent, the workmanship must be so too. And so Adam signifies to be ruddy, and to shine, Lam. iv. 7. So that to Eve in particular may justly be applied the following lines of a celebrated poet:

*A woman loveliest of the lovely kind,
In body perfect, and complete in mind.*

Secondly, The soul of man was of an original far different from that of his body. Moses gives us this account of it, Gen. ii. 7. 'The Lord God—breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' The Lord inspired him with a living reasonable soul, which presently appeared by his breathing at his nostrils; whereas before he was only a fair lifeless body. And this different account of man's soul and body clearly holds forth, that it was not fetched out of any power in the matter of his body, but was created of nothing. For this inspiration plainly implies that something was infused into it, which was not in it before, and did not originally inhere in it. Thus was the soul both of the man and the woman created; for that both were created with rational souls, is taught in our text, where they are said to be made after God's image; and Moses leaves us to gather the manner of the creation of the woman's soul from that of Adam's. Concerning the soul of man, three things are specially to be known.

1. That it is an incorporeal or spiritual substance, different from the body. It is called a *spirit*, Zech. xii. 1. And Stephen prays, Acts vii. 59. 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Compare Luke xxiv. 39. where our Lord says concerning his body after his resurrection from the dead, 'Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.'

2. As the souls of Adam and Eve were immediately created of God, so the souls of all their posterity are immediately formed by God, and proceed not from their parents by generation, or any other way; but God infuseth the soul created by him of nothing, into the body formed in the womb when it is fitly organised to receive it. And yet a man may properly be said to beget a man, though he only begets the body, as well as to kill a man, though he can only kill the body. This is plain from that express scripture-testimony, Zech. xii. 1. — 'that formeth the spirit of man within him.' So, Heb. xii. 9. God is held forth as 'The Father of spirits,' in opposition to men as 'the fathers of our flesh;' which must needs be by immediate creation: for otherwise he is the Father of our flesh too, Eccl. xii. 7. 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.' He gave the body too, but the soul in such a manner as he gave not the body.

3. Hence the soul is immortal, being a spirit, and dies not with the body, Eccl. xii. 7. just cited. Being immaterial, not consisting of parts, it cannot be dissolved. Men can kill the body, but not the soul; and therefore it doth not die with the body, being invulnerable, and unsusceptive of external injuries, Matth. x, 28. and xxii. 32. Neither does it sleep till the resurrection, as some have foolishly supposed. Our Lord told the thief on the cross, that that very day he (that is, his soul) should be with him in paradise, not to sleep, but to be actively employed in exercises peculiar to the heavenly state. And certain it is that the apostle Paul had no such thought, when he said, Phil. i. 23. 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.' If his soul was to sleep and doze in indolence and inactivity after his death, he had never preferred the dissolution of his body, and the advantage of being with Christ, to his continuing in his mortal state, in which he was most usefully employed.

Thirdly, Why did God make man male and female?

1. That man might have a meet help, Gen. ii. 18.; and this was the meekest help for the comfort of life, (however uncomfortable sin has now made it); otherwise God had given Adam a friend, and not a wife. Hence the endearments of conjugal society, when discreetly and properly entered into and cultivated, are found, even in our present imperfect state, far preferable to those arising from the strictest and closest friendships among men.

2. For the lawful propagation of mankind, Gen. i. 27, 28. that there might be a godly seed, Mal. ii. 15. and for a remedy against all inordinate lusts and libidinous desires.

II. Let us now consider God's making man after his own image.

Here I shall shew, 1. Who was created after God's image; and 2. Wherein this image consisted.

First, I am to shew who was created after the image of God. It was both the man and the woman, as is clear from the text. In this respect; indeed, there was one thing wherein the man excelled the woman, which is taken notice of by the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 7. 'He is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man.' Not but that the woman is the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, as well as the man: but the man is the image of God in respect of that authority which he has over his wife, who is the glory of man in respect of her subjection to him. So that what we say of the man as to his being created after the divine image, must be understood of the woman too.

Secondly, I will shew wherein the image of God, in which our first parents were made, consisted. Abstracting from the spirituality of their souls, and the erect and graceful posture of their bodies, peculiar to rational creatures alone, which are but a faint shadow of the image of God, (if they can with any propriety be called a shadow of it at all), this image doth principally at least shine in the soul, and those glorious qualities wherewith man was endued, that is, both the man and the woman.

1. The image of God, after which man was created, consisted in knowledge, Col. i. 10. He was created wise: Not that he knew all things, for that is proper to the omniscient Being alone; but he was ignorant of nothing that he was

obliged to know; he had all the knowledge that was necessary for life and godliness. He had clear and distinct apprehensions of God, his nature and perfections, far superior to any knowledge of that kind that can now be acquired by the most diligent and the most laboured researches of human industry. And we can hardly suppose that he was ignorant of the great mystery of the Trinity, considered abstractly; as it was most certainly the second person who appeared to and conversed with him*. This knowledge or wisdom of man appeared in his knowledge of the miraculous formation of Eve, whose nature and duty, as well as his own towards her, he declares; which he could not know but by a prophetic spirit. The primitive pair had God's law written on their hearts, Rom. ii. 15. even that same law which was afterwards written on tables of stone, and promulgated from mount Sinai. It was consecrated with them; so that no sooner were they man and woman, than they were knowing and intelligent creatures, endowed with all the knowledge necessary for their upright state. Adam's giving names to the beasts, and those such as were expressive of their natures, Gen. ii. 19. was a great evidence of his knowledge of nature. Thus his knowledge reached from the sun, that glorious fountain of light, to the meanest glow-worm that shines in the hedge. And that God gave them dominion over the earth and all the inferior creatures, is an evidence that they were endued with the knowledge of managing civil affairs, which a wise man will manage with discretion.

2. The image of God consisted in righteousness, Eph. iv. 24. There was a perfect conformity in his will to the will of God. He was endued with a disposition to every good thing, Eccl. vii. 29. 'God made man upright.' His will was straight with God's will, not bending to the right or left hand, without any irregular bias or inclination. And he had full power and ability to fulfil the whole law of God. As, in respect of knowledge, he perfectly knew the whole extent of his duty, so he was created with sufficient powers for the due performance thereof.

3. It consisted in holiness, Eph. iv. 24. Man's affections were pure and holy, without being tinctured with any vicious appetite. They were regular and orderly, free from all dis-

* The learned Witsius may be consulted upon this head, *Oeconomy of the Covenants*, book i. chap. 2. § 5. *et seq.*

order and distemper. They were set on lawful objects, and that in a right manner, loving what God loved, and hating what he hated; loving and delighting in God with all his heart, strength, soul and mind. Yet all this happy disposition was mutable, he was not confirmed therein, nor set beyond the reach of falling therefrom, as the event has mournfully shewed.

This is that image of God wherein man was created, consisting in original righteousness, where his reason was naturally subject to God, his will to his reason, and his affections to his will, and consequently all duly subordinated to God, and directed to him, without any propensity or inclination to evil. A signal of this was, that both our first parents were naked, and yet were not ashamed, nor susceptible of shame.

That man was created in this condition, wise, altogether righteous, and holy, is not only clear from the above-cited scriptures, but is also agreeable to reason; which suggests, that nothing impure or imperfect, nothing having any vicious tendency or inclination, could proceed out of the hands of an holy God, who cannot be the author of evil. Man was created after the image of God; and in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, the scripture shews us, the image of God consists. Moreover, God made all very good, Gen. i. 31. Man's goodness consists in these excellent qualities; and without these he would not have been fit for the end of his creation. How was it possible for him to have exercised the dominion he was invested with over the creatures, or served his Creator in the manner that became him, without such endowments? Hence I infer,

(1.) That man was not created in pure nature, that is, with bare faculties, neither good nor evil. For 'God made man upright,' Eccl. vii. 29.

(2.) That there was not naturally in man a combat betwixt the flesh and the spirit, betwixt reason and appetite; no inclination to sin, no lustings of the flesh, or the inferior faculties of the soul. For this corrupt will or inclination is sin properly and truly, as the apostle shews, Rom. vii. 7. and the fountain of all sin. And to say, that these dispositions were in man at his original formation, makes God indeed the author of sin; seeing he made (as they falsely pretend) man of such matter as is necessarily accom-

panied with this corrupt will and depraved inclination. For says the apostle, 'All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,' 1 John ii. 16.

(3.) That original righteousness was natural to man, and not supernatural in the primitive state. Natural it was, in so far as it was concreated with him, and was necessary to the perfection of man as he came out of the creating hands of God; and was not added to be as a bridle to his natural inclinations to evil, whereof he had none.

(4.) That Adam had the same spiritual strength in innocence wherewith now the regenerate do believe in Christ; having a power to do whatsoever God should command, and to believe whatever he should reveal.

4. The image of God consisted consequently at least in dominion over the inferior creatures, whereby he had a right to dispose of them according to his pleasure, Gen. i. 26, 27.; which was a resemblance of the supreme dominion of God over the creatures, though not absolute and unlimited, but dependent on God. This was evidenced by the beasts being brought to Adam, in token of their subjection to him, and his imposing names on them expressive of their natures and properties.

The image of God seated in man's spiritual and immortal soul, endued with understanding, will, and affections, shone forth also in his body, which had a wonderful beauty in it, and such an admirable contexture of parts, adapted to their several uses and ends, as shewed it was intended for an immortal duration. There was no blemish, defect, nor disease, to be found in him. He was not liable to any attack by gout or gravel, or any tormenting pain. All the humours of his body were in a just temperament and disposition, calculated to prevent any distemper which might tend to the dissolution of that excellent constitution. His senses were all quick and lively, able to perform with vigour and delight their several operations. He was immortal in this state; and not subject to the attacks of death. Though his body was composed of jarring elements, which had a natural tendency to dissolution, yet the soul was endued with such virtue as to embalm the body, and preserve it from the least degree of corruption. The tree of life was the sacramental pledge of man's immortality. The erect figure of his

body looking towards heaven, and the majesty that is in his countenance, shewed men to be the chief of the works of God in this lower world*.

I shall shut up all with a few inferences. 10

1. Ah! how are we fallen from heaven! What a lamentable change has sin brought on man! It has defaced the moral image of God, with which man's soul was beautifully decorated in his primitive state, and rent in pieces that pleasant picture of himself which God set up in this lower world. This stately fabric lies now in ruins, and calls us to lament over its ruins with weeping eyes and grieved hearts. Now there is ignorance in the mind, instead of that knowledge of God and divine things, with which it was richly furnished in its primitive state. The understanding, that as a lamp or candle shone brightly, is now enveloped with darkness. The will, that was exactly conformable to the will of God, and naturally disposed to comply with every intimation thereof, is now filled with irregularity, enmity, and rebellion against God and his law. The affections that were all regular, holy, and pure, are now disordered and distempered, placed upon and eagerly bent towards improper and sinful objects, loving and doating upon what men should hate, hating what they should love, joying in what they ought to mourn for, glorying in what is shameful, abhorring the chief good, and desiring what is ruinous to them. All the members of the body that were subordinated to the upright mind, and entirely at its command, are now in rebellion, and mislead and enslave the mind and superior faculties. And the creatures that were man's humble servants, ready to execute his commands, are now risen up against him, and the least of them having a commission, would prove more than a match for him. Nay, it is with difficulty and much pains that any of them are brought to engage in his service. Ah! how dismal is man's case! The crown is fallen from our head: wo unto us that we have sinned. Let us weep and mourn over our ruined state, and never rest till we get it repaired by faith in the Lord Jesus, the great Repairer of this spiritual breach.

* Several useful observations relative to man's original state may be seen in the author's book, entitled, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, state 1. under the title, *Of Man's Original Righteousness*; and in his treatise, entitled, *A View of the Covenant of Works*, published in 1772, p. 12, 13, 14.

2. How lovely are knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, wherein the image of God consists! They shine with a dazzling brightness, and should charm and captivate our minds. But, alas! by nature we are blind, and see not their beauty and excellency. O! let us endeavour, through grace, to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Try if this blessed change has passed upon you, if ye be now light in the Lord, be disposed to do his will, and are holy in heart and life. Study righteousness and holiness if ye would be like God. And beware of ignorance, unrighteousness, and impurity, which proceed from Satan, and make you so unlike a righteous and holy God.

3. Come to the Lord Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and the beginning of the creation of God, who at first made man after the divine image, and can make him so over again, and will do so to those that come to him by faith, with this addition, that the image of God which he will impress on the soul anew, shall never be lost any more. O come to him now, that ye may become God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.



OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

MATTH. x. 28.—*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.*

OUR Lord is here encouraging his disciples against all the troubles and distresses they might meet with in their way, and particularly against the fear of men, by the consideration of the providence of God, which reaches unto the meanest of things, sparrows and the hairs of our head. Sparrows are of a mean price and small value; and yet, for as mean as they are, God preserves them, guides and disposes of all things concerning them, so that one of them cannot fall to the ground by shot or any other way, without his sovereign ordering and disposal.

The instruction deducible from the text is,

Doct. 'There is a providence that extends itself to the least of things.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew that there is a providence.

II. Consider its object.

III. Explain the acts thereof.

IV. Consider its properties.

V. Lastly, make improvement.

I. I am to shew that there is a providence. This appears,

1. From plain scripture-testimonies; as Psal. ciii. 19. 'His kingdom ruleth over all.' Acts xvii. 28. 'In him we live, and move, and have our being,' Eph. i. 11.—'Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' Providence is also held forth by a three-fold scripture-*emblem*. Chiefly, (1.) Mount Moriah, which upon occasion of the miraculous preservation of Isaac, and a ram to be put in his room in order to be sacrificed, was called *JEHOVAH JIREH*, i. e. *The Lord will provide*, Gen. xxii. 14. (2.) Jacob's ladder, on which God appears managing all things, Gen. xxviii. (3.) Ezekiel's wheels, where there was a wheel in the middle of a wheel, denoting the agency of the first cause, and the superintending and directing providence of God, Ezek. i.

2. From the nature of God, who being independent, and the first cause of all things, the creatures must needs depend upon him in their being and working. He is the end of all things, wise, knowing how to manage all for the best; powerful to effectuate whatever he has purposed; and faithful to accomplish all he has decreed, promised, or threatened.

3. From the harmony and order of the most confused things in the world. Every thing appears to a discerning eye to be wisely ordered, notwithstanding the confusions that seem to take place. What would become of the world, if there were not a providence seeing men that despise all order; and would fain give loose reins to their lusts and unbridled inclinations, are always the greatest party, and would overpower and destroy the smaller and most virtuous party? Herein the truth of providence clearly appears. The extraordinary judgments that have pursued and been inflicted upon wicked men, and the remarkable deliverances

that have been granted to the church and people of God in all ages, do loudly proclaim a providence.

4. From the fulfilment of prophecies, which could not possibly be without a providence to bring them to pass.

II. Let us, in the next place, consider the object of providence, or that which it reacheth and extendeth to. And this is all the creatures, and all their actions, Heb. i. 3.—‘Upholding all things by the word of his power, Psal. ciii. 19. ‘His kingdom ruleth over all.’ The angels are subject to this providence, Neh. ix. 6. ‘Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.’ So are also the devils, these infernal spirits, Matth. viii. 31. ‘If thou cast us out (said they to Jesus), suffer us to go away unto the herd of swine.’ It reacheth natural things, as clouds, snow, winds, &c. as appears from Psal. civ. cxlvii. and from daily observation. Casual things are ordered by providence, as lots, Prov. xvi. 33. ‘The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.’ So in the case of accidental manslaughter, Exod. xxi. 13. ‘If a man lie not in wait, and God deliver him into his hand.’ There is nothing so mean but providence extends to it, such as the falling of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of our head. It is God that feeds the fowls and the young ravens that cry. He clothes the lilies and grass of the field, that have no hand of man about them. He made lice, frogs, &c. a plague to scourge Pharaoh and his people, worms to eat up Herod, &c. In a special manner providence is conversant about man, forming him in the womb, ‘Hast thou not poured me out as milk (says Job), and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with flesh and hast fenced me with bones and sinews,’ Job x. 10, 11.—bringing him forth out of his mother’s bowels, and holding him up thereafter, Psal. lxxi. 6. His heart is in the Lord’s hand, and all his thoughts and inclinations are under his controul, Prov. xxi. 1. He directs and orders all his steps. The most free acts of the creature’s will are governed by superintending providence. All their good actions, John xv. 5. ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ So also their evil actions, Acts iv. 27, 28. ‘For of a truth against thy holy

child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done,' Gen. xlv. 7. 'God sent me before you,' says Joseph to his brethren, though they had wickedly sold him into Egypt.

III. I proceed to consider the acts of providence. They are two, preserving and governing the creatures and their actions.

1. God by his providence preserves all the creatures. This preservation of the creatures is an act of providence, whereby they are preserved in their being and power of acting, Heb. i. 3. 'Upholding all things by the word of his power.' In this God sometimes makes use of means, and sometimes acts without means. We have both described, Hos. ii. 21, 22. 'I will hear saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.' He preserves the heavens immediately, the earth, the corn, the wine, and the oil, &c. mediately. And thus by his providence he provides all things necessary for the preservation of all things; Psal. cxlv. 15, 16. 'The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' This act of providence is so necessary, that nothing could subsist one moment without it. For there is no necessary connexion betwixt the being of the creatures this moment and their being the next; and as they could not give themselves a being, so they cannot continue it, but must be upheld by God as a ball in the air, Heb. i. 3. There is a continual efflux of providence necessary for preserving and upholding the creatures in their being; otherwise they would be independent, and could preserve themselves, which is grossly absurd.

2. God does not only preserve the creatures, but governs and manages them, which is the second act of providence; whereby he disposes of all things, persons, and actions, according to his will, Prov. xxi. 1. 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will, Prov. xvi. 33. 'The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.' Chap. xvi. 9. 'A man's heart deviseth his way; but the

Lord directeth his steps.' And this act of providence is also necessary : for as the creature cannot be or exist without God, so neither can it act without him, Acts xvii. 28. ' For in him we live, and move, and have our being.' God does not make man as the carpenter doth the ship, which afterwards sails without him; but he rules and guides him, sitting at the helm, to direct and order all his motions : so that whatever men do, they do nothing without him; not only in their good actions, where he gives grace, and excites it, working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure ; but also in their evil actions, wherein they are under the hand of Providence, but in a very different manner.

For understanding this point, how the providence of God reacheth to and is concerned in sinful actions, we are to consider, that God neither puts evil into the hearts of men, nor stirs them up to it : for, says the apostle, Jam. i. 13. ' God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man.' And therefore he is not the author of sin. But,

1. God permits sin, when he does not hinder it, which he is not obliged to do. Not that it falls out so as he cannot hinder it, for he is omnipotent, and can do all things; nor yet as if he cared not what fell out in the world; but he does wisely, for his holy ends, efficaciously will not to hinder it : Hence we read, Acts xiv. 16. that ' God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.' He does not permit sin, for that he will not violate or force the creature's free will; for God's providence offers no violence to the will of the creature; and if so, he should never hinder sin at all, for the same reason. But certainly he has holy ends in the permission of sin : for thereby his justice, mercy, wisdom, and love, in sending his Son to save sinners, do conspicuously appear, which otherwise would have been under an eternal cloud, hid from the view of men and angels.

For the further illustration of this doctrine relating to the concern of providence in sinful actions, we are to consider them in a twofold respect, as simple actions, or natural actions of the creature, abstract from any obliquity or deformity cleaving to them; and as actions having irregularity and pravity in them. Considered as natural actions of the creature, they are all effected by the providence of God,

which co-operates with, and enables the creature to produce them, in such a manner that without the efflux of providence the creature could not move a hand or foot, or perform any action whatever ; ‘ for in him we move ;’ and no action of the creature simply considered, or as a natural action, can be sinful, but has a goodness of being in it, and is effected by the influence of providence. As to the pravity or sin that is in actions, as God decreed the futurity of sin, or permitted it to take place, and did not hinder it ; so all the sin or vitiosity that is in actions proceeds entirely from the creature, and the evil lusts and passions that are in his heart.

Thus a man’s taking up a stone, and throwing it, is a natural action, which the providence of God enables him to perform ; but his throwing it at another man with an intention to kill him, is permitted by God, otherwise it could not take place ; for if a hair cannot fall from our head without the providence of God, much less can a man be murdered without it ; and the killing of the man by the throwing of the stone, proceeds entirely from the malice and wickedness that was in the heart of the murderer, the operation of which God did not hinder, which he is nowise obliged to do.

2. God leaves the sinner so far as he sees meet to the swing of his own lusts, and denies him restraining grace. Thus, it is said of Hezekiah, a godly king, that, “ in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him ; that he might know all that was in his heart,” 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. And when the restraint is taken off the sinner, he runs furiously, to evil.

3. God bounds sin, and restrains men in their sins, as he does the raging sea, allowing it to go so far, but no further. He has such a power and command over wicked men, that they are not masters of their own affections and dispositions, but many times act quite contrary to what they had firmly resolved and proposed ; as in the case of Laban. He pursued Jacob, when he left Padan-aram, in order to return into his own country, with a wicked intention to do him hurt, by robbing him of his wives, children, and cattle ; but the Lord restrained him, and influenced him to enter into a covenant of friendship with the good patriarch, Gen. xxxii. Thus

Esau had resolved on Jacob's death, and went out to meet him with a purpose to destroy him; but when providence brought them together, it is said, "Esau embraced Jacob, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Thus Balaam came with an express intention to curse Israel, and yet he fell a blessing them. Thus he bent the hearts of the Egyptians to favour the Israelites, so that they sent them away with great riches, by lending them jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and costly garments. Thus, by a secret instinct, he turned Jehoshaphat's enemies away from him, when they came with a purpose to destroy him, 2 Chron xviii. 31.; and at another time he turned his enemies against themselves, so that they sheathed their swords in one another's bowels, 2 Chron. xx. Thus also he restrained the soldiers that broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with Christ, from touching his, in order to accomplish his word, that a bone of the paschal lamb, which was a type of Christ, the Lamb of God, should not be broken. So true is that saying of the Psalmist, Psal. lxxvi. 10 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.' God has a bridle in the mouths of wicked men, when they are under the most impetuous fury of their lusts, to turn them as he will, restraining and curbing in respect of some, and giving swing to others.

4. *Lastly*, God over-rules all to a good end. God has one end in wicked actions, and the sinner another. The sinner minds and intends evil, but God means and designs good by them all. So Joseph's brethren, in their cruelly selling him for a slave, meant evil to the poor youth; but God, in that dispensation meant it for good; and brought much good out of it to Joseph, and his father and brethren. Thus the Jews crucified Christ out of malice against him; but God by that crucifixion intended satisfaction to his justice for the sins of men, and the redemption and salvation of an elect world. Thus God brings good, the greatest good out of the worst of evils. What greater evil or more atrocious wickedness can be imagined, than the violent death of the innocent Son of God, who went about doing good, and was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners? and yet what a rich and astonishing good resulted therefrom, even glory to God, and peace and good-will towards men!

IV. Our next business is to consider the properties of divine providence.

1. God's providence is most holy, Psal. cxlv. 17. 'The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.' Even though providence reach to and be conversant in sinful actions, yet it is pure; as the sun contracts no defilement, though it shine on a dunghill. For God is neither the physical nor moral cause of the evil of any action, more than he who rides on a lame horse is the cause of his halting. All the evil that is in sinful actions proceeds and flows from the wicked agent, as the stench of the dunghill does not proceed from the heat of the sun, but from the corrupt matter contained in the dunghill.

2. It is most wise, Isa. xxviii. 29. 'This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.' Infinite wisdom always proposes the most excellent ends in all its operations, and uses the best methods for accomplishing its ends. However perplexed confused, and void of wisdom providential administrations may appear to us poor mortals of narrow, shallow capacities, yet they are the result of the highest wisdom and the deepest counsel, as proceeding from and directed by him whose name is *the only wise God*, and cannot but manage all things with the greatest understanding. And the day will at last come when it shall be said by the united voice of the whole assembly and church of the first-born, that God hath done all things well: and then the plan of providence will appear in every respect to have been most wise, harmonious and consistent.

3. Providence is most powerful. Hence the Lord says to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria 'I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest,' 2 Kings xix. 28. 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.' Who can resist his will which is almighty? He can never fail of his end, but all things fall out according to his decree, which is efficacious and irresistible.

I shall conclude with an use of exhortation.

1. Beware of drawing an excuse for your sin from the providence of God; for it is a most holy, and has not the least efficiency in any sin you commit. Every sin is an act of

rebellion against God; a breach of his holy law, and deserves his wrath and curse; and therefore cannot be authorised by an infinitely-holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without detestation and abhorrence. Though he has by a permissive decree allowed moral evil to be in the world, yet that has no influence on the sinner to commit it. For it is not the fulfilling of God's decree, which is an absolute secret to every mortal, but the gratification of their own lusts and perverse inclinations, that men intend and mind in the commission of sin.

2. Beware of murmuring and fretting under any dispensations of providence that ye meet with; remembering that nothing falls out without a wise and holy providence, which knows best what is fit and proper for you. And in all cases, even amidst the most afflicting incidents that befall you, learn submission to the will of God; as Job did, when he said upon the back of a train of the heaviest calamities that happened to him, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,' Job i. 21. In the most distressing case say with the disciples 'The will of the Lord be done,' Acts xxi. 14.

3. Beware of anxious cares and diffidence about your through-bearing in the world. This our Lord has cautioned his followers against, Matth. vi. 31. 'Take no thought (that is, anxious and perplexing thought), saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?' Never let the fear of man stop you from duty, Matth. x. 28, 29.; but let your souls learn to trust in God, who guides and superintends all the events and administrations of providence, by whatever hands they are performed.

4. Do not slight means, seeing God worketh by them; and he that hath appointed the end orders the means necessary for gaining the end. Do not rely upon means, for they can do nothing without God, Matth. iv. 4. Do not despond if there be no means, for God can work without them, as well as with them; Hos. i. 7. 'I will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.' If the means be unlikely, he can work above them, Rom. iv. 19. 'He considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.' If the means be contrary, he can work by contrary means, as he saved Jonah by the

whale that devoured him. That fish swallowed up the prophat, but by the direction of providence, it vomited him out upon dry land.

5. *Lastly*, Happy is the people whose God the Lord is : for all things shall work together for their good. They may sit secure in exercising faith upon God, come what will. They have ground for prayer ; for God is a prayer-hearing God, and will be inquired of by his people as to all their concerns in the world. And they have ground for the greatest encouragement and comfort amidst all the events of providence, seeing they are managed by their covenant God and gracious friend, who will never neglect or overlook his dear people, and whatever concerns them. For he hath said, ' I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. xiii. 5.

THE WISE OBSERVATION OF PROVIDENCES ILLUSTRATED AND ENFORCED.

PSAL. cvii. 43.—*Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*

WHOSOEVER would walk with God, must be due observers of the word and providence of God, for by these in a special manner he manifests himself to his people. In the one we see what he says; in the other what he does. These are the two books that every student of holiness ought to be much conversant in. They are both written with one hand, and they should both be carefully read, by those that would have not only the name of religion, but the thing. They should be studied together, if we would profit by either ; for being taken together, they give light the one to the other ; and as it is our duty to read the word, so it is also our duty to observe the work of God, Psal. xxviii. 5. The one I formerly recommended; and I am now to press the other, as a proper addition to our late discourse on the providence of God, from the text now read, Wherein we have two things.

1. The observing of providences recommended, *Whoso is wise, &c.* In the Hebrew it runs, *Who is wise, and will observe these things.* Wherein we may observe,

1st, The duty itself recommended, *observing these things.* Where we are to consider the act and the object.

(1.) The object *these things*; that is, the dispensations of providence. These are the things the Psalmist would have men to observe. For the design of this psalm is to praise God for his wonderful works of providence in the world, especially in the church. For this cause he sets before us, (1.) Wonderful deliverances wrought by providence, instanced in the seasonable relief given to, (1.) Needy and bewildered strangers, far from their own, ver. 3.—9. (2.) Captives and prisoners, ver. 10.—16. (3.) Sick people at the gates of death, ver. 17.—22. (4.) To seafaring men in a storm, ver. 23.—32. (2.) Strange and surprising changes in human affairs. (1.) Fruitful places made barren, and barren places fruitful, ver. 33—35. For an instance of which we need but consider this our own country, sometime a forest, for little use but to be a hunting-field, now comfortably maintaining many families, and useful to the nation, by its great store. (2.) Mean families raised by a blessing on their husbandry and store, and cast down again from their prosperity by cross providences, losing as fast as they got before, ver. 36,—38. (3.) Those that were high in the world abased, and those that were mean and despicable raised to honour, ver. 40, 41. These turns of providence are of use to silence saints, and silence sinners, ver. 42. Now, here is a field opened for serious observation. These and such like things we are called to notice.

(2.) The act, *observation*. We must not let providences pass without remark, but observe them carefully, as men that are neither fools nor atheists, but have eyes in their heads, and do not think the world is guided by blind chance, but by an infinitely wise God. The word signifies to take heed, and retain, as a watchman in a city does. We must take heed to them as they fall out, and carefully keep them in mind, that they be not forgot, or slip out of our minds.

2dly, The qualification necessary to fit a man for this duty, *wisdom*. This is true spiritual wisdom; for in scripture language all strangers to serious godliness are accounted fools, however sharp-sighted otherwise they be. As for others, they neither will nor can rightly observe these things.

3dly, The manner of the expression. It intimates, (1.) That there are few so wise as to observe providences. Most part of the world are stupid in that point; they let them go and come without notice, Jer. ix, 12. (2.) That those who are truly wise will do it, Hos. xiv. ult.

2. The advantage accruing from a wise observation of providences. They shall understand thereby the loving-kindness, goodness, and mercy of God, written out in his dispensations towards themselves and others; as we know how one stands affected to us by his behaviour towards us. His works will give us a clearer discovery of his glorious perfections; and these observations will enrich us with experiences. It is remarkable, that some of these things are cross providences; yet a right observation of them will shew us God's kindness; for the divine goodness may be seen in cross providences as well as in favourable ones.

From the text I shall only observe one doctrine at present.

Doctr. "It is the duty of Christians wisely to observe providences."

This is a weighty point in practical religion, that requires observation in speaking to it, and practising of it.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What it is to observe providences wisely.

II. What are the objects about which we are to make our observations.

III. What we are to observe in them,

IV. The reasons why Christians should wisely observe providences.

V. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew what it is to observe providences wisely. It presupposes some things, and imports some things,

First, It presupposes these four things.

1. That there is a providence. The world is not managed by fortune, nor do things fall out by blind chance. That there is a God, and that there is a providence, have been always looked on as certain maxims, establishing one another, by men of sound judgment. And indeed to set up the creatures to act otherwise than under the providence of God, is to set them up for independent beings, that is, for gods. The scripture is plain that it reacheth all things, Rom. xi. 36. 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things;' even from the greatest to the least, as ye will see from Mat. x. 29, 30, 31. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing: and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many spar-

rows.' And unless it were so, how could he foresee and foretel things, Isa. xlv. 10.

Some think this would disturb his repose, and is unworthy of him, and his purity and wisdom. But do not these atheists see the sun in the heavens undisturbed, with his (yet) universal influence, shine on the dunghill as well as the garden, without contracting any spot? And is it unworthy of God to govern what he has created? As for the wisdom in the management of the world, they are fools who judge it folly before they see the end.

2. The faith of this providence. We must believe the doctrine of providence, if we would bewise observers thereof. The faith of the saints in this point may be shaken in an hour of temptation; as was the case with Asaph, Psal. lxxiii. 13, 14, 15. 'Verily (says he) I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.' And the unbelief of others therein makes them half atheists, Mal. iii. 14, 15. 'Ye have said, it is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.' And the slender belief there is of it in the world makes men overlook providence, Hab. i. 16. 'Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense into their drag: because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.' Labour ye firmly to believe providence, that ye may observe it; nay, believe it, and ye will observe it.

3. Providence has a language to the children of men. It is a clear part of the name of God whereby he manifests himself to the world, and has served to convince men of his eternal power and Godhead, whom no other arguments could reach: Dan. iv. ult. 'Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.' Psal. xix. 3, 4. 'There is no speech, nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.' Rods have a language, Micah vi. 9. 'The

Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name : hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.' And so also have mercies a language, Rom. ii. 4. 'Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.' And providences being the work of a rational agent, they must have a design.

4. A disposition to understand the language and design of providence. It is for this end they are observed wisely, Micah vi. 9. forecited. God speaks by providence, and the wise hearken by observation, that they may know what is meant by those characters, in which God writes his mind towards them. Hence the more one pursues communion with God, he will the more narrowly observe providence; and when he grows remiss and negligent as to communion with God, he lets these things easily pass. But these are the prints of the Lord's feet, which one walking with God will set himself to observe.

Secondly, To observe providences wisely, imports these five things.

1. A watching for them till they come. Hence says the prophet, Hab. ii. 1. 'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.' This is to wait on the Lord in the way of his judgments, Isa. xxvi. 8. A practice necessarily following on the serious practice of godliness, in laying matters before the Lord by prayer, and depending on him according to his word, Psal. cxxx. 1. 3, 6. 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. I wait for the Lord, and my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: I say more, than they that watch for the morning. Some providences have a glaring light with them, that cannot but strike the eye of the beholder; but others not being so may pass unobserved, if people be not on their watch. Providence sometimes works long under ground, and wraps itself up in a long night of darkness; but the wise observer will wait the dawning of the day, and the setting up its head above ground, Psal. lxxix. 3. 'Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God,' Lam. iii. 49, 50. 'Mine eye trickleth down and ceaseth not, without any intermission: till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.' For they that believe will not make haste.

2. A taking heed to them, and marking them when they come, Isa. xxv. 9. 'Lo this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' Heeding them, I mean, as from the hand of the Lord; for though men heed the thing, if they do not heed the hand it comes from, they have but the carcase without the soul of providences. The threads of providence are sometimes so small and fine, and our senses so little exercised to discern, that they may come and go without our notice, Luke xix. 44. 'Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.' Therefore the eyes of the wise man are in his head, to observe what comes from heaven; looking aforehand, and in the time; for he that looks sees, Ezek. i. 15. Zech. vi. 1.

3. A serious review of them, pondering and narrowly considering them. We should not only look to them, but into them, Psal. cxi. 2. 'The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.' And the more we see of them, the more of God we will see in them; for the further we wade in these waters, the deeper. Providence is a wheel within a wheel, a piece of the nice workmanship of heaven, which may make us cry out with wonder many a time, *O wheel!* Ezek. x. 13. The design of providence oftentimes lies hid, not to be seen at first view; but we must look again and again, and narrowly inspect it, ere we can comprehend it. It is a mystery many times, looking at which our weak eyes will begin to dazzle. And that we may unravel the clue by a sanctified judgment, Psal. lxxvii. 6. it will be needful to call in the help of prayer, with much humility, faith, and self-denial, Job x. 2. and of the scripture, Psal. lxxiii. 16.

4. Laying them up, and keeping them in record, Luke i. 66. We should keep them as one would do a treasure, for the time to come. Then are they experiences, which will be notable provision for after-times. O, if these observations were wisely made, and carefully laid up, the former part of our life might furnish noble helps for the latter part of it; and the longer we lived, the richer would we be in this spiritual treasure: even as in war one victory helps to get another. And the old disciple might have a body of practical experimental divinity in his head, drawn forth from his own observation. We find David, when young.

improving providences formerly thus observed, 1 Sam. xvii. 37. 'The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine;' and when old doing the same, Psal. xxxvii. 25. 'I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'

5. *Lastly*, It is a practical observation of them. They who observe providences wisely do not observe them only to clear their judgments, and inform their understandings, as by matters of speculation; but to influence their hearts and affections in the conduct of their life, Micah vi. 9. The more that one wisely observes providence, he will be the more holy. The observing the work of providence about himself and others, will advance the work of grace in the heart, and holiness in the life, Rom. v. 4. 'Patience worketh experience; and experience, hope,' Psal. lxxiv. 7, 9. 'God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.' It is a woful observation of providence, when it has no good effect on people to make them better. Hence Moses says to the Israelites, Deut. xxix. 2, 3, 4. 'Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles: yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.' But it is yet worse when people are made worse thereby, as in the case of him who said, 'Behold this evil is of the Lord, what! should I wait for the Lord any longer?' 2 Kings vi. 33. But it is a kindly effect of it when men accommodate their spirits to the divine dispensations they are under, according to that, Eccl. vii. 14. 'In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider.'

II. I come now to speak of the objects about which we are wisely to make our observations, *these things*. This is a spacious field, as broad as the universe, or the whole creation, so far as we come to the knowledge any manner of way of the works of God. For providence reacheth to all things, and in every thing the finger of God is to be seen.

None of all God's works of providence laid open to our view are excepted, nor allowed to be overlooked, Psal. xxviii. 5. And all of them may be profitably noticed. But more particularly, I shall offer you a sample of the admirable web of providence; a sample, I say, for how small a part of his ways do we know? The dispensations of providence may be considered,

1. With respect to their objects.
2. With respect to their kinds.
3. With respect to the time of their falling out.

FIRST, Providences may be considered with respect to their objects, which are all the creatures and all their actions. And here let us,

FIRST, Look into the invisible world, and trace providence a little there. It becomes Christians to cause their eye to follow there where God's hand is before them at work. David tells us, Psal. cxxxix. 8. 'If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.' God is there with his hand of providence, ver. 10. 'Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me,' And the apostle gives the Christian that character, 2 Cor. iy, 18. that 'he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen,

First, Look to the lower part of that world, the kingdom of darkness, and there you see devils and damned spirits of men, with the providence of God about them in an awful manner. A fearful web of providence encompasses them.

1. Concerning devils, view the awful providences they are under, and observe,

(1.) How these once glorious creatures are now irrecoverably lost, and reserved to a certain and dreadful judgment, 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6. Behold and learn the severity of God's justice from this his work; how no natural excellency will preserve the creature from wrath when once defiled with sin. They were the first that ventured to break over the hedge of the holy law, and God set them up for dreadful examples to the whole creation. Behold the power of God, whose hands devils themselves cannot rid themselves out of. And understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, in providing a Saviour for man, and not for them, Heb. ii. 16.

(2.) How, notwithstanding, these malicious creatures are not so pent up in their prison, but they are permitted to go about through the world; yet this world is generally inhabited without molestation from them. Only now and then, in some very rare cases, they are suffered to molest men, by a particular providential permission as in the case of Job, chap. ii. This general case of the world is a continued wonder of providence. How is it that ever we get any rest from them in house or field? It is not for want of will or natural power, but from the restraint of providence upon them, continued upon them, notwithstanding of the world's wickedness. Observe this thankfully, and understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

2. Concerning damned spirits, who are in hell under the wrath of God, see the awful providences about them, and observe how miserable they are, Luke xvi. 23. being 'punished from the presence of the Lord,' 2 Thess. i. 9. all hopes of recovery being now lost for ever. And learn how precious time is, that what we have to do, ye may do quickly: how deceitful sin and the world are; and how severely God punishes at length, though he may long bear with sinners. And understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, that ye are yet in the land of the living, under means of grace, and hopes of glory.

Secondly, Look to the upper part of the invisible world, the regions of bliss; and there you will see angels and the spirits of just men made perfect wrapt up in a glorious web of providence, sparkling with goodness and mercy. See the Larger Catechism on Providence.

Concerning the blessed angels, observe,

1. How they are established in holiness and happiness, 1 Tim. v. 21. They were of the same changeable nature with those that fell; but God held them up, and has confirmed them, that they cannot fall now. And learn the power of sovereign grace, which can establish one tottering creature when another falls; and how happy they are who cheerfully do the will of God, for so the angels do in heaven. Though proud shining hypocrites fall away and perish, yet trembling saints shall be made to stand.

2. How they are employed in the administration of his power, mercy, and justice, 2 Kings xix. 35. In one night the angel of the Lord smote in the camp of the Assyrians an

hundred fourscore and five thousand, Heb. i. 14. 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' God sends them to take care of his children, who no doubt receive many benefits off their hands, which they are not sensible off. Understand the loving-kindness of the Lord in sending them, and their love to God and man in taking such employment. The living creatures have the wheels going by them.

Concerning the souls of the blessed, observe how blessed and happy they are in the enjoyment of God, where no clouds interpose betwixt them and the light of his countenance, Heb. xii. 23. Luke xvi. 22. And learn here what a vain thing this world is, and how we may be happy without it, yea cannot be completely happy till we be beyond it. What a rich harvest the seed of grace in the soul brings in, and how holiness leads the way to complete happiness. Wonderful is the loving-kindness of the Lord, that takes those who serve him here, to be his attendants in his palace and brings them to the full enjoyment of himself in glory.

Let this suffice for a sample of providence in the invisible world.

SECONDLY, Look to the visible world, and trace providence there. See how the hand of the Lord is constantly at work about these his creatures which he has made, John v. 17. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'

1. Consider the inanimate or lifeless creatures, which are the objects of providence as well as other things. They are not capable of self-governing, but he that made them guides them to their ends.

The heavenly bodies, sun, moon and stars, are under the government of wise providence. They got their orders at first, Gen. i. 16. 'God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.' And they have still observed these orders since. Psal. civ. 19. 'He appointeth the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Sometimes indeed by a particular commission, they have altered their ordinary course as in Joshua's time, chap. x. 12, 13, when the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, for a whole day; but they returned to their course again. The sun keeps his course allotted him by the divine decree; for should he go at random, our earth would either be burnt

or quite frozen up, that we could not live on it. O the loving-kindness of the Lord, that makes the very heavenly bodies punctually to keep pace with our necessities, and has not avenged himself on men's disorders, by suffering these to go into disorder and confusion!

The raging sea is under the management of providence God manages it as easily as the nurse does the infant, whom she swaddles and lays in its cradle, from whence it cannot get out, while she will have it to stay there; Job xxxviii. 11. 'Hitherto shalt thou come (says Providence to this unruly element), but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.' O look to his work, and learn his loving-kindness, Psal civ. 24, 25, 26. 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches, So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts, There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.' Behold his greatness, and adore him, Matth. viii. 27. 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?' Fear before such a mighty One, Isa. xxviii. 2. And let it quiet your hearts under all the toasings ye meet with in the world; for it will cost him but to say, 'Peace and be still;' Psal, xciii. 4. 'The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.'

The air and wind, which no man can lay hold of, are entirely under the conduct of Providence, John iii. 8. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth,' in respect of man; but in respect of God, where he listeth, Matth. viii. 27. foretold, What a wonder is it, (not to speak of tempests, hail, rain, snow, &c. Psal. cxlvii. 15.—18.), that such a thin invisible body should bear up all the fowls of the air, the heavy clouds also, and carry them from place to place, so that we may say, as Psal. xviii. 10. 'He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind! How then can our God be at a loss for means to support us? He has filled the world with it; it is about us, in us, in our nostrils, in our bowels, nay, in every pore of our bodies; yet, without it we could not breathe, yet we see it not. Shall we then think it strange, that the God who made it is every where present? Nay, he is without and within us, though we see him not. If he mix pestilential vapours with it, we

at dead men, as if poison were mixed with our drink : for at every breathing we draw it in ; so entirely do we depend on the Lord. O then understand the loving-kindness of the Lord in this respect.

The earth is under the care and government of the same wise Providence. He made it, and that was a great work ; he preserves it and governs it, and that is another. He supports it, Heb. i. 8. The earth bears us, but what bears the earth ? You cannot think it is infinite or boundless, and therefore that it must have another side opposite to that we are on. Yes, and by the powerful providence of God it hangs like a ball in the air, Job xxvi. 7. ' He hangeth the earth upon nothing.' O then, is there any thing too hard for our God to do ? He fills it with his riches, the surface of it, and the bowels of it, Psal. civ. 24. But what is most necessary for mens use is on the surface of it, easiest to be come at, Job xxviii. He feeds it, that it may feed us, Deut. xi. 11. Hos. ii. 21, 22. When the strength thereof is weakened with new influences from the heavens, he renews it, Psal. civ. 30. And since the flood, the promise then given, Gen. viii. 22. that ' while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease,' has been punctually performed. O understand the loving-kindness of the Lord in these things, what a gracious and bountiful God he is ! And how surely all his promises to his people shall be accomplished.

2. Consider the vegetative part of the world, things that have life, but not sense, such as trees, plants, &c. how Providence cares for and manages them. Our Lord calls us to observe these things, and thereby understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, Matth. vi. 28. ' Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow : they toil not, neither do they spin.' Lilies of the field have not the care of man about them, as those of the garden, but Providence cares for them. This teaches us to lay by anxiety, and trust God, ver. 30. See how the earth is kindly furnished with vegetables by providence, not only for mens necessity, but their conveniency and delight, Psal. civ. 14,—17. And shall not this good God be loved and cheerfully served by us ? Every pile of grass is a preacher of the loving-kindness of the Lord.

3. Consider the sensitive part of the world, such as have

life and sense, but not reason; as birds, beasts, and fishes. And observe what a vast family are maintained on the Creator's cost. And though we cannot trust providence, yet what an innumerable company there is of dependents on mere providence! Psal. civ. 27. 'These all wait upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.' Observe this provision, and thence learn to believe even where ye cannot see, Matth. vi. 26. 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?' For Providence does for them that have none to do for them; Psal. cxlvii. 9. 'He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens that cry.' Observe how providence has subjected them to man as servants that could easily be his masters in respect of strength, as the horse, ox, &c. yet the face of man strikes a damp upon them, which is the more remarkable, that man by sin did forfeit his dominion over the creatures. But this must be resolved into the virtue of that word, executed daily by providence, Gen. ix. 2. 'The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea.' O what a power is in a word of divine appointment?

4. Consider the rational part of the world, men having life, sense, and reason. In these providence shews itself most brightly. Man is the compend of the creation, having a spirit as angels are spirits, and a body with the rest. And he is the peculiar care of Heaven. This is the main object of our observation.

1st, We should observe the dispensations of providence towards societies; and the nearer our relation to them be, we should observe them the more narrowly.

(1.) Towards societies of men in the world, kingdoms, churches, congregations, families, &c.

[1.] Much of the power, wisdom, goodness, justice, &c. of God, might be learned from the revolutions and changes in states and kingdoms, which should make us inquisitive for the knowledge of public affairs. And O what a glorious scene of providence has been opened of late in Britain, shining with illustrious mercy to the church and nation, in delivering us when at the brink of ruin; depth of wisdom,

in baffling in a moment the cunning projects of enemies; all-mighty power, in so easily crushing their towering hopes; radiant justice, in making the stone tumble down on the heads of those that rolled it, and making enquiry for the blood of the saints shed many years ago*.

[2.] Providences toward the church of God are mainly to be observed, 1 Sam. iv. 13. The angels themselves notice these, to learn something from them, Eph. iii. 10. What concerns the church is the greatest work on the wheel of providence; and in most, if not all the great works of God through the world, he has in them an eye to his church. As she is for God, so other things are for her.

Particularly we should observe the way of providence towards the church of Scotland, whereof we are members; which has been as admirable a mixture of mercy and judgment, as perhaps any church since the apostles days has met with. How high has she been raised in peace and purity, and how low laid at other times! How often has she been at the brink of ruin, and wonderfully preserved? How have her faithful friends been signally owned of God, and her enemies often borne the evident marks of God's displeasure! &c. And yet, more particularly,

We should observe the way and aspect of providence towards the congregation, how the Lord has been and is dealing with us, that we may accommodate ourselves to his dispensations, and answer the call of them.

[3.] Towards families. Sometimes the Lord causes a warm sunshine of prosperity on families, and sometimes the heavens are lowering above them; they have their risings and fallings, as all other societies in this changeable world, as is beautifully described by the Psalmist, Psal. cvii. 38, 39, 41. 'He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.' How does Job mournfully observe the way of providence with his family, chap. xxix. 2.—5. and David on his death-bed the humbling circumstances of his! 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

There are few of our families but God has of late one way

* This refers to the suppression of the rebellion in 1715. This part of the subject was preached in December 1716.

or other visited them; his voice has cried to our houses, as well as to the land. It is our duty to observe the same, read the language of it, and comply with the design thereof.

2dly Towards particular persons; for we may learn something from God's way with every one. And,

(1.) Towards others, whether godly or wicked. This was the Psalmist's practice to have his eyes in his head, and to look about him in the world, and learn something for his own establishment, both from the harms and happiness of others, Psal. xxxvii. 35.—37. 'I have seen the wicked in great power; and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.' It is observable, that the holy scripture is not written as a system of precepts, with the reasons of them; but the body of it is a cluster of examples, wherein we may see, as in a glass, what we are to follow if we would be happy, and what we are to shun, Rom. xv. 4. 'For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.' A plain evidence, that whoso would please God, must observe those things that are set before his eyes in providence.

(2.) Towards ourselves in particular. These providences come nearest us, and therefore should be most narrowly observed. In these we are the parties to whom God directs his speech immediately; but, alas! often it is not observed, Job xxxiii. 14. 'For God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not.' There is none of us that are not the objects of wonderful providences, but especially true Christians, who may well say, as Psal. xl. 5. 'Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.' We might each of us fill a volume with accounts of the wonderful works of God, and yet confine ourselves to what has happened to ourselves, if we had but the wisdom to observe the same. Every moment we would be a wonder to ourselves, if we could but discern the beautiful mixture of that web of providence wherein every moment we are wrapt up.

(1.) Let us observe how we are powerfully preserved by Providence, Heb. i. 3. Psal. xxxvi. 6. 'Lord, thou pre-

servest man and beast.' When we consider how unlike our souls are to our bodies, we may more wonder at the continuance than the breach of that union. When we think how death has as many gates to come in by, as our body has pores, how the seeds of a thousand diseases are in our bodies, what a train of perishing principles they are made up of, how easily, while we walk amidst the creatures of God here, fire may be set to the train, and the house of clay quickly blown up, we may say there is something more astonishing in our life than in our death. And it must be a powerful providence that preserves this life of ours, as a spark of fire in the midst of an ocean of water, or as a bag of powder amidst sparks of fire flying on every hand.

Besides, how few of us are there, but sometimes there has been but as a hair-breadth betwixt death and us, by reason either of diseases or unforeseen accidents, which we could not therefore ward off. So that we might say of our preservation, This is the finger of God.

What remarkable deliverances has the Lord wrought for some by unordinary means, as Jonah preserved by a whale, and Elijah fed by the ravens!

(2.) How we are holily, wisely, and powerfully governed by Providence, our persons and actions disposed of according to his will, either in mercy or in wrath, Dan. iv. 35. 'All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?' Psal. cxxxv. 6. 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.' While we sail the sea of this world, we may well perceive, that it is not we ourselves, but holy providence that guides the ship: Jer. x. 23. 'O Lord, (says the prophet), I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' And while men will not see this, to engage them to a life of holiness, faith, and dependance on God, they are often made to feel it, by their dashing on rocks, to the bruising, if not to the splitting of them, Isa. xxvi. 11. 'Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed.' Let me instance here but in two things, to shew that God sits King, and rules among men.

(1.) Man proposeth, but God disposeth, Lam. iii. 37

‘Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?’ How often are mens towering hopes levelled with the ground in a moment? Their projects are laid with all the wit and industry they are capable of, managed with all diligence and circumspection, so that they cannot see how they can misgive, but must take effect according to their wish. But he that sits in heaven, in a moment looses a pin, and all the fabric falls to the ground, their projects are baffled, their measures disconcerted, some stroke of providence, which ungodly men call an unlucky accident, mars all. This was evident in Haman’s case. Sometimes it is done by an invisible hand, whereby the wheels are taken off, that they can drive no farther, Job xx. 26. ‘All darkness shall be hid in his secret places: a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.’ How often do men find their greatest cross where they looked for their greatest comfort! and things turn about quite the contrary way to what was their design.

(2.) Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity, Gen. xxii. 14. How often does the Lord begin his work where man ends his, and can do no more? When men know not what to do, God opens a door; and when they have no firm ground of their own left to stand upon, he sets their foot on a rock, Psal. cvii. 27, 28. ‘They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.’ Their hopes are disappointed, but their fears and desperate conclusions are prevented. Something threatens them a stroke, which they see not how to escape; but an invisible arm wards off the blow; and what they look for their ruin in, there they find, by an over-ruling providence, healing and upmaking, Est. ix. 1. What is most unlikely is brought about, while the fairest hopes are made like the blossom that goes up as dust. Thus God baffles mens hopes on the one hand, and their fears on the other, that they may see, there is a wheel within a wheel that moves and guides all.

SECONDLY, We may consider providences with respect to their kinds, Psal. xl. 5. forecited. The wisdom of God is manifold wisdom, and produces works accordingly, Psal. civ. 24. And each of them is to be observed. I will instance in these three distinctions of providence.

First, Providences are either cross, or smiling and favourable. Both ought to be observed, and may be so profitably.

1. We should observe cross providences that we or others meet with. They come not by chance, but under the guidance of a holy sovereign God, Job v. 6. 'Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.' Amos. iii. 6. 'Shall there be an evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' God makes himself known by them, his justice, truth, holiness, wisdom, and power, Psal. ix. 16. 'The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.' And he requires us to observe them, Micah vi. 9. 'Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.' And it is a horrible provocation not to observe them, Isa. xxvi. 11. forecited, and not to comply with the design of them; to murmur, but not kindly mourn under them, Job xxxv. 9, 10. and xxxvi. 13. Sometimes men meet with crosses in the way of their duty, Gal. vi. 17. and sometimes in the way of sin, as Jonah. The design of both is to purge away sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. But, without observations, the plaister is not applied to the sore.

2. Smiling and favourable providences towards ourselves or others, Psal. xl. 5. Many, in their observations of providence, are like the flies that pass over the sound places, and swarm about the sores. They are still complaining of their crosses and sorrows, and will nicely reckon them up: but as to their mercies, they will not go the length of the unjust steward, of a hundred to set down fifty, Luke xvi. 6. They have their language, but it cannot be understood without observation, Rom. ii. 4. Dependence on God, and humility of heart, would teach us carefully to observe our mercies, Lam. iii. 22. Gen. xxxii. 10. even when we are meeting with heavy crosses, Job i. 21.

Secondly, There are great lines and small lines of providence. And,

1. We should observe the great lines of providence in signal events. Some dispensations bear such a signature of a divine hand, and so flash like lightning on mens face, that one can hardly miss to observe, but must say, as Exod. viii. 19. 'This is the finger of God.' 2 Chron. xvi. 19, 20. 'Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand, to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests,

the leprosy even rose up in his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence, yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.' It is rare that God leaves himself without a witness, by some such signal providences; yet such is the perverseness of the heart of man, that as the blind cannot observe the flash of lightning, even these are lightly looked at, 1 Sam. vi. 9.

2. The small lines of providence. The most minute things are guided by the all-ruling hand, Matth. x. 29, 30. And if God do manage them, it becomes us to notice them. All the king's coin, from the massiest piece of gold to the smallest penny, bears the king's image and superscription, and therefore the least as well as the greatest is current in trade. So the smallest lines of providence pass current with those that keep a trade with heaven. Gideon notices his hearing a fellow tell a dream, Judges vii. 13, &c. Heman, the removing of an acquaintance, Psal. lxxxviii. 8, and Jacob, a kind word, the shew of his brother's countenance, Gen. xxxiii. 10.

Thirdly, There are common and uncommon providences.

1. We should observe common and ordinary dispensations, such as fall out every day in the common road of providence. These, because they are common, lie neglected: yet the 104th Psalm is penned on that subject. I have observed to you already, how providence appears in the constant revolutions of seasons, day and night; by the one the weary earth is refreshed, and by the other weary man, the night being fit for rest. The subjection of the beast to man, by virtue of that divine word, Gen. ix. 2. forecited, without which man could not have his necessary designs served. I add, that wonderful diversity of faces and features, without which the man could not know his wife, nor the parents their own children, nor the judge the criminal; so that without this there could be no orderly society, no government, commerce, &c. These are a sample of common providences, which studied might be of great use.

2. Uncommon and unordinary providences, as miracles, which are beyond the power of nature; extraordinary deli-

verances, judgments, discoveries of secret crimes ; which are bright spots here and there interspersed in the web of providence, and challenge a peculiar regard.

THIRDLY, we may consider providences with respect to the time of their falling out. The works of providence run parallel with the line of time, and the continuance of the world, John v. 17.

1. We should observe the past dispensations of providence, Psal. lxxvii. 5. 'I have considered the days of old, (says Asaph), the years of ancient times.' An observer of providence must look off unto others, look into himself, and, with respect to himself and others, look back also.

(1.) Past providences towards others afford a large field for observation, reaching from the creation till now, Psal. cxliii. 5. 'I remember the days of old,' says David. He remembered how the Lord dealt with Nimrod, Abimelech, Pharaoh, &c. What a chain of wise providences has encompassed the world in the several generations thereof? what a beautiful mixture of providences has always appeared towards the church, while the mystery of God, not yet finished, has been a carrying on! What very remarkable things have fallen out in the life and death of particular persons! From all the particulars of these we might draw something for our spiritual advantage, as the bee from every flower extracts her honey.

(2.) Past providences towards ourselves in particular afford also a large field, reaching from our first being till now. Look back and consider that wonderful providence that framed thee in the womb, Job x. 10, 11. The Psalmist finds himself in a transport of wonder upon this reflection, Psal. cxxxix. 14, &c Consider how the same kind providence brought thee safe out of the womb, that the womb was not made thy grave, or that thou wast not stifled in the birth, Psal. xxii. 9. How thou wast provided for and preserved from the dangers in infancy, by the same kind providence, whilst thou couldest do nothing for thyself, Psal. xxii. 9, 10. Observe the providences of God towards thee in thy childhood, youth, middle age, and forward to the present time; and thou must say, as old Jacob, Gen. xlviii. 15. 'God fed me all my life long unto this day;' and with the Psalmist, Psal. lxxi. 17. 'O God, thou hast taught me from my youth.' Observe how God gave thee such and

such education, ordered thy lot in such and such a place in his earth, and in such sort as he has done, how he brought thee into such and such company, saved thee from such and such dangers, &c.

2. We should observe the present dispensations of providence towards ourselves and others, Zech. vi. 1; 2. It is a stream that still runs by us, like those rivers that bring down the golden ore, Psal. lxxv. 11. By day nor night it ceaseth not, Psal. xix. 2: Providence with the one hand bids us stoop and take on the day's load of benefits, Psal. lxxviii. 19. and with the other hand lays on the day's burden of evils, Matth. vi. ult. And therefore that is our duty, Psal. iv. 4. 'Commune with your own hearts upon your bed, and be still;' that having made our observations through the day, we may cast up our accounts against night.

Thus far of the objects on which we are to make observations:

III. The next general head is, to shew what we are to observe in providences. It is not enough to observe the work itself, but we must be as particular as we can about it. This is like the bruizing of the spices, and the pouring out of the ointment, whereby their fragrantcy is best perceived. There are these nine things I recommend to your observation.

1. The timing of providences, the great weight of a dispensation sometimes lies in this very circumstance, that then it came, and neither sooner nor later. And O the admirable wisdom that appears in thus jointing of them! Gen. xxiv. 45. Abraham's servant prays to be guided to the woman appointed to be Isaac's wife; and in the very time Rebekah comes: Gideon, in the very time when he comes near the enemy's camp, hears one of them telling his dream, Judges vii. 13, &c. Uzziah is smitten in the very time when he is attempting to offer incense upon the altar of incense. And here particularly observe the timing of providences,

(1.) With respect to the frame of our spirit; for much lies in observing what frame of spirit a mercy or stroke overtakes us in. So the church observes the timing of her deliverance, that it came when they were not looking for it, Psal. cxxvi. 1. And that made it look the greater. Job observes, that his trouble came on him when he was far

from security, and that made him bear it the better, Job iii. ult. Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar's trouble began when their hearts had quite forgot God, and that made the heavy hand of God the heavier. O notice carefully what frame of spirit your mercies or crosses find you in; ye will see much in that.

(2.) With respect to your circumstances. How often does kind providence catch the child at the very halting, Psal. xciv. 18. and an angry God set fire on people's nest just when they have well feathered it, and throw them down when they are just come to their height? Job xx. 29. So he did with holy Job, chap. xxix. 18. Observe it, and ye will find it either a sting or a sweet ingredient in what you meet with.

There is a piece of holy foresight that an exercised Christian may have by observing the timing of a dispensation. If thou be such an one, and wouldest know whether a mercy thou hast got will last or no, how was it timed; came it to thee when thy spirit was weaned, lying at the Lord's feet? Thou hast a sure hold of it. But came it when thy spirit was upon the fret, unhumbled, unsubdued, and thou wouldest needs have it? It will stick short while in thy hand, Psal. xviii. 17, 18. Hos. xiii. 11. Fruit plucked off the tree of providence ere it be ripe, will last short while, and set their teeth on edge while they have it.

2. The beginnings and dawns of providences, Psal. cxix. 6. 'My soul, says the Psalmist, 'waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning.' So did those mentioned, Luke i. 66. 'All they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? Sometimes a work that God has upon the wheel of providence will be but like the cloud, as big as a man's hand; but being observed, it will spread. Good Jacob observed the dawns of providence in Joseph's case, though he little knew what a bright day it would end in, Gen. xxxvii. 11. It may be long betwixt the beginning and the end; but it is good to notice, as the holy penman does, the door of hope a little after the midnight of the captivity, Jer. lii. 31. There is a great advantage in being able to follow the thread of providence from the beginning of it.

3. The progress of providence, endeavouring always to notice the several steps of it, Luke ii. 19. and 51. and to fol-

low the thread. For God ordinarily brings great works to pass by degrees, that so men that are weak may have the greater advantage for observation, Hos. vi. 3. Mercies and strokes may be long a-working, the decree may go long ere it bring forth: but much of the wisdom of God may be seen in the several steps it takes, and the advances it makes.

4. The turns of providence. The wheel of providence is a wheel within a wheel, and sometimes it runs upon the one side, and sometimes on the other. Observe the change of the sides. For providence to our view has many turnings and windings, and yet really it is going straight forward; Zech. xiv. 7. It runs fast to the evening with the church there; but behold the turn, 'In the evening it shall be light.' See the turn of the wheel in Joseph's case, Gen xli. 14. in Pharaoh's taking him from prison; in the church's case, Est. vi. 3, 4: in Ahasuerus's inquiring whether any honour had been done to Mordecai for his discovering a plot formed against the king's life; and in that of Hagar and Ishmael, Gen. xxi. 17. in the angel's calling to them out of heaven, to know what ailed them. And ye may see the wheel ordinarily turns at the brow of the hill.

5. The end of providence, James v. 11. There seemed to be many dismal circumstances in Job's case, concurring to his ruin. His substance goes, his family, his health and ease; his wife bids him blaspheme and die; his friends represent his case as that of an hypocrite; many a black thread appears in the web: but O what a beautiful piece does it appear when it is wrought out! Job. xlii. 10, 12.

6. The mixture of providence. The unmixed dispensation is reserved for another world; there is mercy unmixed, Rev. xxii. 1. and judgment unmixed, chap. xiv. 10. But here all we meet with is mixed. There is never a mercy we get, but there is a cross in it; and never a cross, but there is a mercy in it. Observe the mixture of your mercies, to make you humble and heavenly; for the fairest rose that grows here has a prickle with it, and there is a tartness in our sweetest enjoyments. Observe the mixture of your crosses, to make you patient and thankful; for the bitterest pill God gives you to swallow has a vehicle of mercy, Lam. iii. 22. 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.' And wise observers will see many mercies in one cross, if they will but allow themselves to see how God could and might have made it worse.

7. The concurrence of providences. Sometimes several dispensations of providence meet together in one's case. One while there may be a meeting of several mercies together, which make a golden spot of time among them to a person. At other time several afflictions meet together, one wave comes on the back of another, till the furnace is by several coals heated seven times. Job had experience of both in his case, a train of troubles first, and a train of mercies succeeded. Jacob, when he came homeward to Canaan, had a train of troubles that waited on him. And in the case of the people of God, a very fair blink forebodes a heavy shower. The duty in that case is, 'In the day of prosperity be joyful; but in the day of adversity consider,' Eccl. vii. 14. Sometimes there is a meeting of several kinds, and one gets his bed strewed with a rose and a thorn, &c.

8. The design and language of providences, Micah vi. 9. They are the works of infinite wisdom, and therefore cannot be without a design. And seeing God speaks to us by his providences, and we ought to hear and obey when he speaks, we should be very careful to know the meaning of dispensations, that we may fall in with the call of providence. And the Lord takes it heinously ill if we do not, Jer. vii. 7. If it be dark and doubtful let us lay it before the Lord in prayer, set it in the light of the word, and meditate on it till we find it out, Psal. lxxiii. 16, 17.

9. *Lastly*, The harmony of providences. There is a four-fold harmony to be observed in providences.

1st., Their harmony with the word, which they agree with as the copy with the original. The sealed book of God's decrees is opened in providences. Hence that of the opening the seals, in the Revelation. And the book of the scripture is written over again in providence, so that as in water face answereth to face, so do God's works to his word, Psal. xlviii. 8. Providence is a most regular building, and the word is the draught of that building. Providence is a curious piece of embroidery, and the word is the pattern. So that in providence the word has been a-fulfilling ever since it was given, and still it is a-fulfilling, and the pattern will be wrought out when the mystery of God is finished, and not till then, Mat. v. 18. And thus it is a-fulfilling, not only by the extraordinary but ordinary providences. If a man quarrel any thing in a building or embroidery, there must

be a comparing it with the draught or pattern of the house or embroidery, and he will be satisfied. Psal. lxxiii. 16, 17.

Ye will never observe providences aright, if ye do not observe their harmony with the word; for the word is the instituted means of the conveyance of influences, Isa. lix. ult. By neglecting of this, some dispensations prove stumbling-blocks, over which some break their necks, Mal. iii. 15. Many draw harsh and ungodly conclusions against others, whereby they only discover their own ignorance of the scriptures, and of the method of providence, Luke xiii. 1.—5. John ix. 2, 3. like Job's censorious uncharitable friends, Job v. 1.

O Sirs, learn this lesson, that all providences which you, or I, or any person or society in the world meet with, are accomplishments of the scripture. And they may be reduced to and explained by one of these five things. Either they are accomplishments of,

(1.) Scripture-doctrines, Psal. xlviii. 8. 'As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.' May not every one see, that few great men are good men? Do not stumble at it; it is but a fulfilling of the scripture, 1 Cor. i. 26. 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' That the safest condition for the soul is the medium between great wealth and pinching poverty, according to Augur's prayer, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. 'Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain'.—That Satan and the corruptions of the heart are sometimes most busy, when people are setting themselves to serve the Lord, agreeable to Paul's experience, Rom. vii. 21. 'I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.'—That the generality of the hearers of the gospel are not savingly wrought on by it, according to these scripture-passages, Isa. liii. 1. 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Matt. xxii. 14. 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' And so in other cases. Or of,

(2.) Scripture-prophecies, 1 Tim. 18. 'This I commit unto thee, O Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee.' What astonishing providences were the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, the expulsion of the

Canaanites, Cyrus' overturning the Babylonian empire, and loosing the captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans? But all these were but a fulfilling of scripture-prophecies. What an astonishing providence was the rise, reign, and continuance of the Antichristian kingdom, and the reformation of religion in many nations, after they had lain many hundreds of years under Popish darkness; These are the fulfilling of the apocalyptic prophecies. And what an astonishing providence was the introduction of the gospel into Britain, and the preservation of it hitherto, amidst so many attempts to destroy it? It is an accomplishment of that prophecy, Isa. xlii. 4. 'The isles shall wait for his law.' Or of,

(3.) Scripture-promises, Josh. xxi. 45. 'There failed not out of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass,' Psal. cxix, 65. 'Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word.' You see the orderly revolutions of the year, and seasons thereof; that is the fulfilling of the scripture, Gen. viii. 22.—That those who have suffered loss in the cause of Christ, have been bountifully treated with so much in hand, that they have had more content and inward satisfaction in that, than any other time of their life, is a fulfilling of scripture, Mark x. 29, 30. 'There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.'—That the way of duty has been not only the most honourable but the safest way, is an accomplishment of scripture-promises, Prov. x. 9. 'He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.' Chap. xvi. 7. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.'—That communion with God is to be had in ordinances, is conformable to promise, Exod. xx. 24. 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.' Or of,

(4.) Scripture threatenings, Lev. x. 3. 'This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the congregation I will be glorified.' Hos vii. 12. 'I will chastise them, as their congregation

hath heard.'—You may observe how dangerous it is to meddle for the ruin of the work and people of God, from that passage, Micah. iv. 11, 12. 'Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.'—How their faces are covered with shame that despise the Lord, from 1 Sam. ii. 30. 'The Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'—How the faster people cleave to their temporal comforts, they have the looser hold, from Ezek. xxiv. 25. 'I will take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters.'—How people may run long in an evil way, but their foot will slip at length, from Deut. xxxii. 35. 'Their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.'

(5.) *Lastly*, Or they are the parallels of scripture-examples. Psal. cxliii. 5. 'I remember the days of old. The serious observer will find a surprising fulness here, as in the other parts of scripture. I will instance in three very astonishing pieces of providence, which often put good men to their wits end, to know how to account for them; yet being brought to the glass of scripture-examples, such a harmony appears betwixt the one and the other, as cannot but be extremely satisfying.

(1.) Sometimes we see men walking contrary to God, and yet providence smiling on them, and caressing them, as if they were the darlings of heaven. This has puzzled the best of men. It put Jeremiah sore to it, chap. xii. 1, 2. 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.' It was near carrying Asaph quite off his feet, Psal. lxxiii. 13. 'Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my

hands in innocency. But, O! is there not a beautiful harmony in this with scripture-examples? How did all Israel as one man back Absalom in his rebellion? How did Haman rise till he could come no higher, unless he had got the throne? And the tyrant Nebuchadnezzar carries all before him according to his wish, &c. And scripture-doctrine unriddles the mystery, Psal. xcii. 5, 6, 7. 'O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not: neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish: it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.'

(2.) How often do astonishing strokes light on those that are dear to God, as if God selected them from among the rest of the world, to shew his hatred of them? Eccl. viii. 14, 'There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.' O Sirs, this has been very puzzling to those that have met with it. But behold the harmony with scripture-examples; as in Job's case. Eli loses his two sons at one blow, his daughter-in-law dies, and himself breaks his neck. Aaron the saint of God has two sons slain by fire from heaven. The apostles were set forth as appointed for death, &c. 1 Cor. iv. 9. Babylon is at ease when Zion lies in ruins. See Lam. ii. 20. But further,

(3.) How often has it been the lot of some of God's people to meet with heavy strokes from the hands of the Lord, when they have been going in the way which God himself bade them take? That will try people to purpose that observe these things. But blessed be God for the Bible, that lets us see this is no untrodden path. Jacob has an express command to return to Canaan, Gen. xxxi. 13. But O what a train of heavy trials attend him! Laban pursues him as a thief, Esau meets him with four hundred men to slay him, the angel puts the knuckle of his thigh out of joint, his daughter is ravished by the Shechemites, his sons murder the Shechemites, Deborah dies, and his beloved wife Rachel dies, and Reuben defiles Bilhah. It was no wonder he said, 'Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,' Gen. xlvii. 9.

2dly, There is a harmony of providences among themselves. It is observed of the wheels, that the four had 'one likeness,' Ezek. i. 16. The dispensations of providence of the same kind, at the greatest distance of time from one another, have a beautiful likeness to one another. And therefore Solomon observes, Eccl. i. 10. 'Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.' Did ever any meet with such a temptation and trial as I have met with? say some. But says the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 13. 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.' Was ever any afflicted at the rate that I am? says another. But hear what the apostle says, 1 Pet. iv. 12. 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial; which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.' See how Solomon accounts for this, Eccl. i. 9, 10, 11. 'The Thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come, with those that shall come after.'

(1) They are all wrought after the same pattern, namely, the word, in the various parts thereof. The same word which was accomplished on a nation or person thousands of years ago, is accomplished on others at this very day. The same word fulfilled in one's case some time ago, may be fulfilled over again when their case comes to be the same it was then.

(2) They have all the same specific end, to reward or punish, check, direct, &c. And where the ends are alike, it is no wonder the measures be so too. God designed to make his enemies fall, and to deliver his church at the brink of ruin, in Esther's days; and so in ours of late. Hence the plot was suffered to succeed; and when all seemed to be done, providence struck a sudden stroke, and turned the wheel on the wicked: But is there any thing new here? was it not just so in Esther's days?

It is good to observe this harmony; for by these means one sees himself in a paved road, and so may the better know how to steer his course. When one finds himself in

a road, where providence has led him before, he may consult his way-marks that he set up when he was there formerly, and so may travel it the more easily. And the same may he do when he is in the road, where he observes others have been before him. He may beware of the steps where they stumbled; and keep the road by which he sees they got through.

3dly, There is a harmony of providences with their design and end, Deut. xxxii. 4. 'All his ways are judgment.' There is an admirable fitness in God's measures to reach his holy ends. The wheels were full of eyes as guided by infinite wisdom; and whithersoever the living creatures had a face looking, the wheels had a side to go on. Whatsoever God created was very good, Gen. i. ult. that is, very fit for the end of its creation. And so are all God's works of providence exactly answering their end. It is often observed of the wheels, *They turned not when they went*, as a chariot must needs do, when the charioteer has driven the horses the wrong way. If they were to go to another quarter, they were but to go on that side that looked that way all along. There is a twofold harmony to be observed here.

(1.) The harmony of every piece of providence with its particular end and design. Where there lie a great many pieces of wright-work framed and shapen by the tradesman, should a bungler take them in hand, he cannot join them; he complains that one mortise is too strait, and another too wide: but the artificer can sort them, and put each in its own place, and they answer exactly. So it is with providence. Every piece answers to its end, Eccl. iii. 11. 'He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.' There is a glaring instance of this in the strokes that providence reaches sinners to punish them for particular sins, where there is such an affinity betwixt the sin and the stroke, that the sin may be read in the punishment. This is done many ways, which yet perhaps may be all reduced to one of these four. The stroke answers the sin, either;

(1.) In time *, the stroke following hard at the heels of the provocation, as 1 Kings xiii. 4. When Jeroboam put forth his hand from the altar, saying, lay hold on the man of God, immediately his hand dried up. So God punished Dinah's gadding abroad unnecessarily, David's security by

* *Homopathia.*

his adultery, and Peter's going into the high priest's hall. Or,

(2.) In kind *, whereby God justly pays home a person in the same coin as he sinned. Adonibezek is a notable instance of this, Judg. 1. 7. 'Threescore and ten kings (says he) having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me.' David's injury to Uriah's bed is punished by Absalom's doing the same to his. So many disobedient to their parents are paid home by their children again. Some wrong and oppress others, and afterwards others deal just so by them. Or,

(3.) In likeness †, the stroke bearing a resemblance to the sin. The Sodomites burn in lust, and they are burnt with fire from heaven. Nadab and Abihu sinned by offering strange fire, and they are consumed with fire from the Lord. Jacob beguiles his father, pretending he was Esau, and Laban beguiles him with Leah instead of Rachel. As sinners measure to God in spirituals, he measures to them in temporals, 1 Cor. xi. 30.

(4.) In flat contrariety ‡. Adam will be as God, and he becomes like the beast that perisheth. David's pride of the numbers of his people is punished by the loss of seventy thousand of them. Rachel must have children, or she cannot live; she gets them, and dies in bringing one forth. The Jews crucify the Lord of glory, lest the Romans should come and take away their place and their nation; and that is the very thing that brings them.

(2.) The harmony of the several pieces among themselves with respect to their common end and design. And here there is often a beautiful mixture of contraries, to make together one beautiful piece, Rom. viii. 28. 'All things shall work together.' Strike the strings of a viol one by one, they make but a sorry sound; but strike them together by art, they make a pleasant harmony. The nicest piece of work lying in pieces, is but a confused heap. Joseph is sold for a slave; and he is brought into Pharaoh's presence. How contrary do these seem? but the former was as necessary as the latter, to accomplish the design of providence. Haman is advanced, and the good deed done by Mordecai is forgotten, till the fittest time of remembering it. Both

* *Autopathia.*

† *Homoiopathia.*

‡ *Enantipathia.*

harmonize to Haman's ruin. Providence loses no ground in all the compasses we imagine it takes: every circumstance is necessary to the carrying on of the common end.

4thly, There is a harmony of providences with the prayers of the people of God, that have the Spirit of prayer, Gen. xxxii. compared with xxxiii. 10. Many dispensations of providence are the returns of prayer. This seems to be the ground of that conclusion, Psal. xli. 11, 'By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me;' and puts an additional sweetness in mercies. There is one general rule as to the hearing of prayer, John xvi. 23. Whatsoever prayers are believingly put up in Christ's name are heard. And so we should notice the harmony of providence with prayer. Concerning which I offer these five observations.

(1.) That where God has no mind to give such a mercy, the spirit of prayer for that mercy will be restrained, Jer. vii. 16. 'Pray not thou for this people,' &c. As, upon the other hand, when God minds his people a favour, he will open their lips to pray for it, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. 'Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' And this is no wonder, if we consider, that the Spirit of the Lord dictated the word whereof providence is the accomplishment, and the same Spirit guides the wheel of providence, Ezek. i. 20, and the same Spirit is the author of acceptable prayer, by which the sap of the word is sucked out in providence, Rom. viii. 26, 27.

(2.) God hears believing prayers, either by granting the mercy itself which is sought, as Gen. xxiv. 45, in Rebekah's appearing at the well, and drawing water as Abraham's servant had prayed for; or else the equivalent, something that is as good, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. in Paul's obtaining grace sufficient for him. Either of these ways providence brings the answer of prayer. For God's bond of promise that faith lays hold on, and pleads in prayer, may be paid either (as it were) in money or money-worth. And the harmony betwixt prayer and providence is to be acknowledged either of the ways.

(3.) Providence may for a time seem to go quite contrary to the saints prayers, and yet afterwards come to meet exactly. It is an astonishing piece of providence that the saints

sometimes meet with, namely, that a case never is more hopeless than just after they have had a particular concern upon their spirits before the Lord about it; so that they are made to say, as Psal. lxxv. 5. 'By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.' But it is very usual in the Lord's dealings with his people to pass a sentence of death on their mercies ere they get them, as he did with the Israelites in Egypt, who were worse treated by Pharaoh after the application made to him to let them go, than before, Exod. v. ult. Providence acts like a man that is to fetch a stroke, swinging the axe back, that he may come forward with the greater vigour.

(4.) Providence often very discernibly keeps pace with the prayers of his people, that as they go up or down, so it goes. An eminent instance whereof we have Exod. xvii. 11. in that while Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. Hence sometimes a matter will go fairly on, while the soul is helped to believe and wrestle; but when unbelief makes the soul sag, the wheel begins to stand too. And it is no wonder this takes place, where the same Spirit is in the creature, and in the wheel.

(5.) *Lastly*, Providence may sweetly harmonize with the spirit of prayer, and the believer's expression in prayer, and yet not with the desires of their own spirit, which perhaps they went to lay before the Lord, Rom. viii. 26, 27. The not distinguishing of these two makes many see a great jarring betwixt providence and their prayers, while in very deed there is a notable harmony betwixt them. And if they would carefully mark the words in which, under the influence of the Spirit, they presented their petitions to the Lord, they might find them wonderfully agree with the dispensation of providence, though not with the desire of their own spirits.

IV. I proceed, in the next place, to assign reasons why Christians should wisely observe providences.

1. Because they are God's works, Psal. cxxxv. 6. The world, in the framing of it, was not a work of chance; neither is it so in the management of it. Whoever be the instruments and second causes by which any thing falls out in our lot, God has the guiding of the wheels, and has a negative on the whole creation, Lam. iii. 37. 'Who is he that

smith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? Meet me with a favourable event? we are debtors to God for it, As Abraham's servant acknowledged, on the favourable answer he received relating to Rebekah, in his bowing his head, and worshipping the Lord, Gen. xxiv. 26. Do we meet with a cross one? It is the finger of God, though we see a creature's whole hand in it, Amos iii. 6. 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' Now, seeing they are his works, they ought to be observed.

2. Because they are great works, Psal. cxi. 2. 'The work of the Lord is great.' Every work of providence bears the signature of a divine hand upon it. But the stamp is sometimes so fine, and our eyes so dull, that we are slow to perceive it. I told you that there are small lines of providence as well as great: but the great God does nothing but what is great and suitable to himself. Though some of his works are comparatively small, they are all great absolutely. And therefore with respect to those I called small ones, I must say to you, as Deut. i. 17. 'Ye shall hear the small as well as the great.' And good reason is there for it. For,

(1.) The smaller a piece of work is, the greater and more curious is the workmanship. Galen confessed the hand, and extolled the wisdom of God in the thigh of a gnat. An ordinary artificer will fit out a mill; but the small wath requires a curious hand, and pictures of the least size shew most of the painter's skill. That frogs should have been a plague to Pharaoh, or Herod eaten up of worms, was more admirable, than if the one had been plagued with an armed host, and the other devoured by a lion. The rats devouring hats and poppies. (Turn. hist. Prov. chap. 112.) was truly more admirable than the conquests of Alexander and Cæsar both.

(2.) Great things may be lying hid in the bosom of very minute and ordinary things. Search into the rise of that wonderful turn of providence with the church in Esther's days, and ye shall find it to be the king's falling off his rest one night, Est. vi. 1. of that wonderful overthrow of the Moabites, and ye will find it a mere fancy, 2 Kings iii. 22, 23. The curse of God may be in the miscarrying of a basket of bread, Deut. xxviii. 17. And it may be big with

a great mercy. They say the whale is mightily beholden to the little fish called *musculus*, which swims as a guide before her, without which she would be in danger in straits and betwixt great rocks. The little cloud like a man's hand often darkens the heavens ere all be done,

3. Because they are often very mysterious works, and therefore they need observation, Psal. xcii. 5. It is necessary to give us right views of providence, and to keep us from mistakes. The making judgment of providences is a very tender point, wherein the best of men have gone far wrong. Was not Jacob far out when he said, Gen. xlii. 36. 'All these things are against me,' if we compare the promise, Rom. viii. 28. 'All things shall work together for good,' &c. and the event too? Many a time the outside of providence is very unlike it inside. The greatest cross may be wrapt up in what we take to be our greatest comfort; and the greatest comfort may be inwrapt in what we call our greatest cross. Observation must break the shell, that we may look in.

4. Because they are always perfect works. They will abide the strictest search and the most narrow inquiry, Deut. xxxii. 4. Whatever faults we find with them, as we do many, it is for want of due observation. But at length he shall gain that testimony and recantation, 'He hath done all things well,' Mark vii. 37. In these his works no flaw is to be found, no mistake; nothing too much, nothing too little; nothing too soon done, nothing too late done; nothing misplaced, nothing in or over; nay, nothing done that is not best done; nothing that man or angel could make better. The world will startle at this as a paradox; but faith will believe it, on the solid ground of infinite wisdom, though sense contradict it, Isa. xxxviii. 8. Jer. xii. 1. O that they who will debate this truth would come near and observe.

5. *Lastly*, Because they are speaking works, Micah vi. 9. They speak Heaven's language to the earth, and therefore should be observed. And they speak,

(1.) Of him, Psal. xix. 2. They preach to us that he is, what a God he is, how holy, just, wise, good, and powerful, &c. We may see there his perfections as in a glass. Each pile of grass speaks a God, a wise, good, and powerful one. So many creatures as there are, so many mouths to speak of

him. And it is man's work to observe and hear. When God had replenished the heavens with sun, moon, and stars, and the earth with variety of creatures, the creation was still imperfect till man was made. For what avails the musical instrument, if there be no body to play on it?

(2.) For him. Cross providences speak for him, Micah vi. 9. And favourable providences also, Rom. ii. 4. Hereby sinners are instructed in the way they should go, Psal. xxxii. 8. reprov'd, as Joseph's brethren; and comforted, as Paul was, Phil. ii. 27. And, in a word, they call us from sin unto God; by them, where the word goes before, Christ knocks at the doors of sinners hearts, and calls for access.

I come now to the improvement of this doctrine. And, I. It may serve for lamentation. Ah! may we not say, Who is wise to observe these things? Wise observers of providence are thin sown in the world; because there are few exercised to godliness. God has given us enough to observe in the public and in our private case. He is speaking by his providence to the land, he is speaking loudly at this day to the parish, to you and to me, and to every one in particular. But, alas! it is not observed to purpose. Graceless people are presumptuous, and will not observe; and even many godly are heedless, and do not observe. There are these six evidences that this wise observation of providence is very rare.

1. How many are there who see God no more in their mercies and crosses, than if they were a parcel of atheists, that did not think there were a God, or that believed no providence at all? If they get a mercy, God is not owned in it; they sacrifice to their own net. If they get a cross, they cry out by reason of the arm of the Almighty. But some saith, Where is God my Maker? In all the turns of their life and lot, they never seriously look to the wheel within the wheel.

2. How many are there to whom God in his providence is speaking plain language, that he who runs may read it, yet they will not understand it? Psal. lxxxii. 5. God plagues the Philistines for the ark most visibly, yet they are at a loss, saying, It may be it is a chance. Balaam's ass refuses to carry him forward on the way, but he is in a rage against her. God meets sinners in their way, with speaking providences; but on they go; they do not hear, they

will not be stopped: Like the dog, they snarl at the stone; but look not to the hand that threw it.

3. How few are exercised to know the design of providences that they meet with? Many signal mercies they meet with, but put not the question, What is God saying to me by these things? Many a heavy dispensation they meet with, partly by the rod's hanging over their heads, partly by its lying on them; yet they never seriously take up Job's exercise, chap. x. 2. 'I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.' These things let them come and go with as little concern to know the design of them, as if they had none.

4. How few are exercised to comply with the design of providences, to accommodate themselves to the divine dispensations? Job xxxiii. 13, 14. If men were wise observers of providence, it would be their constant practice to be answering the several calls thereof, still facing about towards it, as the shadow on the dial to the body of the sun; Psal. xxvii. 8. 'When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' But, alas! men meet with humbling providences, but they are not exercised to mortify their pride: they meet with awakening providences, yet they are not exercised to rouse up themselves to their duty: they meet with afflicting providences in worldly things, yet they are not exercised to get their hearts weaned from the world; they meet with reproving providences, yet they are not exercised to repent and mourn over the sins thereby pointed out. But they really strive with their Maker, and while he draws by his providence; they hold fast, and will not let it go; Jer. vi. 29.

5. The little skill that people have in judging of providences. A man will readily have skill in his own trade; but it is no wonder to see people unacquainted with things in which their business does not lie. O what commentaries on providence are in the world, that destroy the text! How miserably is the doctrine of particular dispensations perverted! Despisers of God and his ordinances are very easy; and therefore the world concludes; 'it is vain to serve God; and that there is no profit in keeping his ordinances,' Mal. iii. 14. 'The proud are called happy,' ver. 15. They are best that have least to do with them. Good men

meets with signal strokes: the world concludes that they are hypocrites, and they must be guilty of some heinous wickedness beyond other people, Job v. 1. Luke xiii. 1, 2. And a thousand such blunders there are.

6. *Lastly*, They rank poverty in respect of Christian experience found among professors. What a learned Egyptian said to a Greek, *Vos Græci semper pueri*, may be said to many in whom there is some good thing towards the God of Israel. Ye professors are ever children, 2 Cor. iii. 1. Heb. v. 12. And what is the reason, but that we have never yet fallen close to the study of observing of providences? See the text. There is a daily market in providence, but ye do not trade in it; and therefore ye are always poor. There is perhaps a lesson put in your hands this day, that ye had several years since, but ye did not learn it; and so it is now as great a mystery to you as then.

USE II. Of exhortation. O be exhorted to become wise observers of providence. O fall at length upon this piece of practical religion. Many of us have it, I fear, to begin yet; and all have need to mend their pace in it. For enforcing this exhortation, I shall give you some other points of doctrine from the words, by way of motives and direction, and so shut up this subject.

For motives take these doctrines.

1. Wise observing of providence is a rare thing in the world: *Who is wise, and will observe these things*, as the words may bear. And the reason is, the truth of religion is rare, and close and tender walking with God is yet rarer, Matth. xxii. 14. and xxv. 5. The most part of the world go the broad way to destruction, Matth. vii. 14. and therefore they are not concerned to observe the works of the Lord. Many Christians there are, that, alas! In these dregs of time are not exercised Christians. Up then and be doing, and conspire not with the multitude to put a slight on God's speaking by his providence, lest his fury break forth as fire on you with the rest, John vi. 66.

The more rare the observing of providence is, it is the more precious. Stones may be gathered from the surface of the earth, while gold must be dug with much labour out of the bowels of it. The finest things are hardest to be won at: *Nulla virtus sine lapide*. As Christ himself had a stone rolled on him, so every grace, work, and way of

Christ has one. But there is a pearl underneath ; and the heavier the stone, the more precious is the pearl. Come and see in this particular.

II. They that are wise will be observers of providences, *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things.* And at what pitch your wisdom arrives, your observation of providences will follow it, Eccl. ii. 14. The eating of the forbidden fruit cast all mankind into a spiritual madness ; and the truth is, the most part of the world are in that respect as madmen, regarding neither the word nor works of the Lord. But if thou wert come to thyself, it would not be so, Luke xv. 17. How long hast thou acted as a fool, in matters of greatest weight, being penny-wise and pound-foolish, careful for a mite, and in the mean time letting talents slip through thy fingers? Luke x. 41, 42.

O Sirs, how do unobserved providences aggravate our guilt, and increase our accounts ! When the day shall come, the Lord will reckon with the sinner, for all the pains he has bestowed on him to bring him to himself : when his slighting the call of the word shall be aggravated with so many items of providences. How will the sinner look, when the Lord shall say, Did I not give thee such and such mercies to draw thee from thy sin ? lay such and such crosses in thy way to drive thee from it ? What hast thou done with all the instructive up-stirring providences I gave thee ? with all the providential warnings, rebukes, &c. given thee ? Remember that passage, Prov. ix. 12. ‘ If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself : but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.’

III. The wise observation of providences is a soul-enriching trade. *They shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* This is so on two accounts, both deducible from the text.

1. That which seems the most barren piece of providence, becomes fruitful by wise observation. Some of *these things* in the text are very cross providences ; yet even by them one shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. Behold a holy art, whereby ye may not only gather honey out of every sweet-smelling flower, but may gather grapes of spiritual profit off the thorns of afflictions, and figs of thistles. The apostle tells us a mystery, of a pleasure in infirmities, distresses, &c. 2 Cor. xii. 10. Wise observation would let you into the secret.

2. It has the promise, in the text. God has said, such a one shall know more and feel more in religion than others. 'To him that hath (*i. e.* improves what he has) shall be given.' And the more a man set himself to observe, the more he will get to observe, and the more sappy will his observations be. By the wise observation of providences,

(1.) Sin and duty in particular cases is discovered. No dispensations of providence whatsoever can warrant us to go over the belly of God's command, 1 Sam. xiii. 11, &c. But where two lawful things are before us, providence may point out what is present duty, and which of them we are to choose. And so the word teacheth, Psal. xxxii. 8. 'I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.'

(2.) One gets a clear view of the divine authority of the scriptures, very necessary in such an age wherein atheism, profaneness, and immorality so much abound. For the wise observer sees the fulfilling of it exactly, and so is confirmed. While he observes providences, he sees scripture doctrines, promises, threatenings, and prophecies accomplished, and the parallels of scripture-examples; and so reads the truth of God's word in his works, Psal. lviii. 11.

(3.) Hereby a Christian is established in the good ways of the Lord, and that by those very things that make others to stagger, yea, themselves also, when they do not observe, Psal. lxxiii. 22, &c. It is the woful estrangedness to this exercise that makes so many here-away there-away professors, tossed about with every wind that rises, while amidst all these reelings the wise observer sits firm like the expert mariner among the boisterous waves, Psal. cxliii. 5.

(4.) Hereby a Christian gets store of experiences, to lay by him for use at another time. How did Joseph sustain Egypt in time of the dearth, but by the corn laid up in time of plenty? So the Psalmist says, 'O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.' Psalm xlii. 6. But for want of this some people are always from hand to mouth, always to begin; ever learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth, Mark vi. 52.

(5) *Lastly*, It is a nurse to all the graces of the Spirit. It is a notable help to faith, Exod. xiv. ult. A short-limbed faith will reach far up, when it stands upon experiences.—

To love; see the text. Now, the love of God perceived kindles the flame of love in us.—To patience and waiting on the Lord; for observation will keep them from being hasty while the work is on the wheel; Psal. xxxvii. 1.—To hope; 'for experience worketh hope,' Rom. v. 4; for former mercies are pledges of future ones.—To contempt of the world.—To holy fear, Exod. xiv. ult.—To delight and joy in the Lord, Psal. xcii. 4.—To self-loathing, and thankfulness Psal. cxliv. 1, 2, 3, &c.

And now for direction take this doctrine, *There is need of true wisdom to fit a man for right observation of providence.* And that wisdom is,

1. Spiritual wisdom, 1 Cor. ii. 15. Carnal wisdom is no good observer of providence, as the blind man is no fit judge of colours.

2. Scripture-wisdom; for the scripture is the pattern, and providence the work. They that study the language of Heaven in providence, must consult the scriptures as the dictionary for that language.

3. Practical wisdom, Psal. cxi. 2. Even scripture-notions floating in the head will do but little service, but sinking into the heart, reduced into practice, will be of good use here. And the more to fit you for this work, take these following lessons from the word concerning providences.

(1.) The design of Providence may sometimes lie very hid; and therefore it is good to wait, and not to be rash, Psal. lxxvii. 19.

(2.) Sometimes providence seems to forget the promise; but it is not so, but only the time of the promise is not then come, Gen. xv. 4. with xvi. 2.

(3.) Sometimes providence seems to go quite cross to the promise, and his work to go contrary to his word. But wait ye, they will assuredly meet, Gen. xxii.

(4.) Oftimes providence favours a design, which yet will be blasted in the end, for that it was not the purpose of God, Jonah i. 3.

(5.) Oftimes providence will run counter in appearance to the real design, and by a tract of dispensations will seem to cross it more and more, till the grave-stone appear to be laid on it. And yet, 'at evening-time it shall be light,' Zech. xiv. 7.

(6.) Providence many times lays aside the most likely

means, and brings about his work by that which nothing is expected of, 2 Kings v. 11, 12.

(7.) *Lastly*, Sometimes providence works by contraries, as the blind man was cured with laying clay on his eyes.

Learn to live by faith, and be frequent in meditation and self-examination, and be much in prayer.

Thus I have laid before you the duty of observing providences. May the Lord pity them that make no conscience of practising what they hear, and get nothing of all but a testimony against themselves. And may he give us all understanding in all things.

OF THE COVENANT OF WORKS.

GEN. ii. 16, 17.—*And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*

HAVING already shown, that God from all eternity decreed whatever comes to pass; that he executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence; that he made all things of nothing by the word of his power; that he made man upright, adorned with his moral image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and that his providence, extends to all his creatures, and all their actions: that which now falls to be considered is the special act of providence which God exercised towards man, in the estate wherein he was created, namely, the covenant of works which God made with Adam. This covenant is sometimes called *the covenant of works*, because works, or obedience, was the condition of it; and sometimes *the covenant of life*, because life was promised therein as the reward of obedience.

In discoursing from this subject, I shall,

I. Shew that God made a covenant with Adam, when he created him in a state of innocency.

II. Explain the nature of this covenant.

III. Shew why God entered into this covenant with man,

IV. Make improvement.

I. That God made a covenant with Adam when he had created him in a state of innocency, appears from this text with the context. For here are the parties contracting, God and man.

1. Here is the duty which God requires of man, *not eating of the forbidden fruit*; which was no command of the natural law, but superadded thereto, and implied his obligation to observe that law much more.

2. A threatening in case man should break this positive law, *Thou shalt die*,

3. A promise of life in case of continued obedience. For the threatening manifestly implies another proposition, viz. 'If thou eat not of this tree thou shalt live.' Besides, the licence the Lord gives him to eat of every other tree in the garden, and so of the tree of life, imports this promise.

4. Man's accepting of the terms. This is left to be gathered from the proposal of it by the Lord to innocent man, who would refuse no terms that a bountiful God proposed. He objected not against the condition; he betook himself to the privilege of the covenant, eating of the other trees of the garden. Eve owns it, Gen. iii. 3. 'Of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.' And when they had eaten of this forbidden fruit, their consciences terrified them, ver. 8. 'Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.' No wonder that Moses with a running pen describes this transaction, which, as to its being the way of salvation then proposed, passed as a flying shadow. Thus this covenant appears from the text.

To confirm this, consider that the scripture speaks of two covenants, Gal. iv. 24. the one of grace, and therefore the other of works. See also Hos. vi. 7. 'They like men have transgressed the covenant. The Hebrew bears, *as Adam*. It is the same word that occurs, Job xxxi. 33. 'If I have covered my transgressions as Adam.' This will further appear while we shew,

II. The nature of this covenant. Wherein consider,

First, The parties covenanting. On the one hand was God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, man Creator and Sovereign Lord, who is the great Lawgiver, and withal good, and communicative of his goodness to his creatures. On the

other part was man, God's creature; Adam, representing all mankind, and covenanting with God, not only for himself, but for all his posterity, as the natural father of all, of whose one blood nations of men were to be made, Acts xviii. 26. and the appointed federal head: which is clear from the imputation of his sin to all, Gen. ii. 17. 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' Compare Rom. v. 12. 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' There was no mediator in this covenant; nor was there need of any: for man was as yet the holy friend of God, and his service while he stood was acceptable to God, as being fully conformable to his own law, in which he could not but delight, as in his own image.

Secondly, The condition of that covenant was perfect obedience, which God required of Adam, Gal. iii. 10, 12, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.—And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doth them shall live in them.' The tenor of this covenant was, 'Do this and live.' Where three things are to be considered.

1. The law, which was to be the rule of that obedience; which is twofold. (1.) The moral law, or the law of the ten commandments, as the apostle explains it, Gal. iii. 10. fore-cited. It is true, Adam had not this law written on tables of stone, but it was written in his heart; the knowledge of it was concreated with him, so that he naturally knew it, being made upright; which he could not be without this, Eccl. vii. 29. Yea, this law is in part written on man's heart after the fall, as appears from Rom. ii. 15. Much more was it written on Adam's heart before the fall. This law is the perpetual rule of righteousness. (2.) There was the positive symbolical law, of not eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This law was revealed to Adam in the text, neither could he otherwise have known it; it being no part of the law of nature, but a thing in itself altogether indifferent, and depending merely on the will of God, who could have appointed otherwise. Only, as the natural or moral law obliged him to this, seeing it commands the creature to obey God's will in all things; so by this his respect to the moral law was manifested: for as in not eating he testified his supreme love and obedience to God, so in

eating of it he rejected the sweet yoke of God, and took on that of the devil.

2. The nature of the obedience that was the condition of this covenant. It behoved to be perfect.

(1.) In respect of the principle of it. So the law requires men to 'love the Lord with all the heart.' It required not only external obedience, refraining from the thing forbidden; but internal obedience, which behoved to proceed from a disposition of soul bent towards God, in which there was no blemish, and altogether free and unconstrained without any reluctance from within. And this implies, that the glory of God behoved to be man's chief end in all his actions, without having the least squint look to any other as his chief end.

(2.) Perfect in parts extending to all the commands of God whatsoever that were given him, Gal. iii. 10. with respect to his thoughts, words, and actions. He was to do nothing that God prohibited, and to omit nothing that he commanded. He was to fulfil all righteousness, and his obedience was to be as broad as the law. Every commandment, without the least exception as to one title, was to be obeyed to the fullest extent.

(8.) Perfect in degrees. He was to 'love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind,' Matt. xxii. 37. Every act of obedience behoved to be perfect in degrees, wanting nothing of that perfection which the law required. Every action performed by him behoved to be screwed up to the pitch determined in the law, without falling short of it in the least punctilio. All that was lower than that height required, was to be rejected as sinful; and the least flaw spoiled the whole.

(4.) Perfect in duration or continuance, without interruption, while God should have kept him in the state of trial, Gal. iii. 10. This state could not have been for ever, without rendering the promise of life fruitless; for to make a promise necessarily implies that a time is set for obtaining the reward promised to the obedience; and if Adam was to continue in a perpetual state of trial, he could never have obtained the reward of his obedience. The time of this probation is not mentioned in the Bible. Probably it was not to be very long. And perhaps the devil, knowing the benignity and goodness of the Creator to his upright creature man,

that he would not keep him long in a state liable to mutability, was incited to attack him so very early as on the day of his creation, in order to prevent his confirmation in an upright estate.

This and no less was the condition of that covenant. On no other terms could he attain to eternal happiness by it, or be justified in respect of his state before the Lord, though he might in respect of particular actions.

Hence it appears, that sincere obedience could not have been accepted, if it was not altogether perfect; nothing could be accepted, but an obedience altogether without fault or blemish; and that there was no place for repentance under this covenant; no sorrow for transgressing in the least instance could be admitted: for the threatening was peremptory, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' Such a positive denunciation cut off all hope, and rendered repentance of no avail.

3. Adam's power to perform the obedience required. He was able to answer all the demands of that covenant, being *made upright*, Eccl. vii. 29. and in the image of God. There was light in his understanding, sanctity in his will, and rectitude in his affections; there was such an harmony among all his faculties, that his members yielded to his affections, his affections to his will, his will obeyed his reason, and his reason was subject to the law of God. Had he not then sufficient knowledge of his duty? and was he not invested with full power to perform the obedience required of him? Besides, it was not consistent with the justice and goodness of God to have required that of his creature, which he had not given him power to perform. The case is quite otherwise with respect to us in our lapsed state, for we have lost the power of yielding obedience to God's law in Adam. But let it be remembered, that though we are utterly unable to obey, yet God has not lost his right to demand obedience; which should induce us to betake ourselves to the second covenant, where every thing is freely given, and the will accepted for the deed.

Thirdly, The promise of the covenant was life, and therefore it is called *the covenant of life*. Now, a threefold life was promised.

1. Natural life, consisting in the union of the soul with the body, which should have been continued without death, if

he had not sinned, Gen. iii. 19. Though man's body was made of dust, yet, by virtue of the covenant-promise, it would have been secured from mingling with its original materials. As it was created without any principle of death, so it was not susceptible of any hazard from that quarter, as long as the covenant should be observed. His natural life would have remained in constant vigour, without languishing or decay: And he would have enjoyed the comfort of this life pure and unmixed without any of those evils, miseries and inconveniencies, which now overspread the world.

2. Spiritual life, consisting in the union of the soul with God. Man's soul was, and is in its own nature, immaterial and immortal, not liable to dissolution. It was endowed with spiritual life at its creation, living in union and communion with God, and adorned with his image, consisting in righteousness and holiness. This image of God would have been continued in him. His knowledge of God and his duty would not have failed; nor would the righteousness of his will, or the purity and regularity of his affections have decayed. He would still have been the friend of God, and the favourite of heaven; and would never have been without the most lively marks of the love and friendship of his covenant God. He would have had ready access to God, without any eclipse of the divine favour; and the utmost pleasure and satisfaction in doing his duty, which would have been a continual feast to him.

3. Eternal life, on the glorious happiness of heaven. He should have been confirmed in his holy and happy estate beyond the hazard or possibility of sinning, or forfeiting it. Though he was created mutable, and mutability is woven into the very nature of the creature, yet having finished the time allotted for his probation, he would have been secured from actual liability to change for ever. His body would have been absolutely and for ever secured against hazard of death, or hurt from external accidents or injuries. He would have been confirmed in the love and favour of God for ever, without any hazard of falling out of it. The sun of favour from God would have shone upon him, without ever setting. And after the time of his trial was over, he would have been transported, soul and body, into the heavenly paradise, there to abide for ever. He would not have always lived in the

simply paradise, where he was to eat, drink, and sleep, but have been carried to the celestial paradise, where the happy inhabitants live as the angels of God. This is plain, if he consider that application of the covenant of works, Matth. xix. 16, 17.—‘If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.’ Here Christ holds forth eternal life as the promise of this covenant, to be had on the performance of the condition. The weakness of the law to give eternal life now, ariseth only from the flesh, that is, the corruption of nature, whereby we are unable to fulfil the condition of it, Rom. viii. 3. It was eternal life that Christ purchased for his people, and that as he was made under the law, by which he obtained that very life to them, which otherwise they should have had, if man had not sinned, Rom. viii. 3, 4. Gal. iv. 4, 5. Besides, eternal death was threatened; and the goodness of God uses not to propose greater punishments than rewards. And if it had not been so, man had nothing to expect more than he had when created, and set down in paradise.

Fourthly, The penalty of this covenant, in case of disobedience, was death; natural, consisting in the separation of the body from the soul; spiritual, in the separation of the soul from God, a death in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1; and eternal, in the separation of both body and soul from God for ever in hell, Matt. xxv. 41. Man’s body had never died had he not sinned, for ‘the wages of sin is death,’ Rom. vi. ult. and far less his soul, which would have flourished in all the beauty of spiritual verdure and vigour for ever. But it may be asked, How was the threatening accomplished, when Adam lived so long after his fatal transgression? I answer, That day that he sinned he died spiritually. His soul was divested of the image of God that was stamped upon it at its creation; his understanding became dark, his will rebellious, and his affections impure and irregular. He lost the favour of his Maker, and he was exposed to the wrath of God, as a mark at which the arrows of the divine displeasure were to be levelled. That this spiritual death was inflicted upon man immediately after his foul transgression, is evident from those gripes and throws of conscience that seized him, which made him hide himself from God amidst the trees of the garden. And this of course would have actually terminated in eternal death in

hell, had not a Mediator been provided, who found man bound with these cords of death as a malefactor bound to the execution. And as for his natural life, that day he sinned, he got his death's wounds, of which he afterwards died; that day he became mortal, and his body liable to sickness, disease, pain, and every other harbinger of death. The crown of immortality, which he held of his Creator, by virtue of the covenant made with him, fell from off his head, and he became a subject of the king of terrors. He became liable to all those cords wherewith death binds his prisoners. So that he was as sure a dead man as if dead already, though the execution of the sentence was delayed, because of his posterity which were in his loins, and because another covenant was prepared, by which the life and happiness forfeited by the breach of the first covenant, was to be recovered, and that with great advantage.

Fifthly, We may consider how the covenant of works was confirmed. It hath pleased God to append seals to his covenants with men; and this covenant seems not to have wanted some things intended sacramentally to confirm it. Among which may be reckoned,

1. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Gen. ii. 17. What sort of a tree it was, the scripture does not determine. But whatever it was, it was not so called, as having any virtue or power to make men wise; that was the devil's divinity, Gen. iii. 5. who told Eve, that if they eat of it, *they should be as gods*; but he was a liar from the beginning, John viii. 44.; but it was called so, because by it they knew to their fatal experience the happy state they fell from, and the woful misery that fall plunged them into. It obtained that name, because it was a warning-sign to them to beware of the experimental knowledge of evil, as they knew good. They had special acquaintance with good in all its charming kinds; and this tree was set before them as a beacon to warn them from looking after the knowledge of evil, which, like a dangerous rock, would dash them to pieces, if they split upon it. And it served to confirm the covenant, and the happiness of their primitive state; inasmuch as in the threatening relative to this tree was included a promise, that as long as they kept from eating of its prohibited fruit, they should never die. And hence we may gather, which is no improbable opinion, that our first parents could fall by no

other transgression than eating of this tree. And the devil that finished master of craft and subtilty, attacked them in this quarter, as the only side on which he could promise himself success. And alas for poor man! Satan's stratagem succeeded, to the ruin of the whole human race.

2. The tree of life, Gen. ii. 9. Though we have ground to think that this tree might be an excellent means of preserving the vigour of bodily life, as other trees in the garden also were, yet it could have no virtue in itself of making man every way immortal. But it seems to have been called *the tree of life* by reason of its signification being appointed of God as a sacrament, by eating whereof he should have been confirmed in the belief of the promise of life natural being continued, of spiritual life perpetuated, and eternal life to be enjoyed in heaven; which was the main thing, and included the other two, Gen. iii. 22. 'And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever,' he must be driven out; denoting, that man, by sin, having lost his right to eternal life signified by this tree, was driven out, Rev. ii. 7. that he might not profane the sacrament of it, to which he had now no more right. The words do not mean, that if Adam had eat of the tree of life after his fall, he should retrieve his forfeited life; this being impossible, in regard the threatening was express, *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*; and that the tree of life had no such virtue and efficacy in itself, and ceased to be a sacrament of the covenant of works the moment man sinned. It was intended to assure and persuade him of life upon performing the condition; but the covenant being broken that assurance and persuasion actually fell of course. The whole verse may be read thus, *Behold the man who was one of us, to know good and evil: and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, that he may live for ever.* Where three things are very plain (1.) There is no irony or scoff here, as if God should say, Behold the man has attempted to become like one of us, to know good and evil; but how shamefully has he failed of his design! but, on the contrary, a most pathetic lamentation over fallen man. This sentence is evidently broken off abruptly, the words, *I will drive him out*, being suppressed; even as in the case of a father, who, with sighs and sobs, puts his offending child

out of doors. (2.) It was God's design to prevent Adam's eating of the tree of life, as he had eaten of the forbidden tree; thereby mercifully taking care, that our fallen father, who had now got a revelation of the covenant of grace, might not, according to the corrupt natural inclination of men since the fall, run back to the covenant of works for life and salvation, by partaking of the tree of life, a sacrament of that covenant, and so reject the covenant of grace, by eating of that tree now, as he had before broken the covenant of works, by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (3.) At this time Adam imagined, that by eating of the tree of life he might recover his forfeited life, and so live for ever.

III. I come now to shew why God entered into this covenant with man. I know no reason can be given for this, but what must be resolved into the glory of the grace and goodness of God. It was certainly an act of grace and admirable condescension in God, to enter into a covenant with his own creature. Man was not at his own but God's disposal; nor had he any thing to work with but what he had from God; so that there was no proportion betwixt the work enjoined and the reward promised. Man before that covenant was bound, but God was free: for man was under the law of nature before he was under the covenant; for the law was created with him, that is, he was no sooner a rational creature than he was under the law; but this covenant was not made with him till after he was brought into the garden to dress it. Before that covenant God was free to dispose of man as he saw fit, however perfectly he kept the law; but when in the covenant he made the promise of conferring life upon Adam in case of continued obedience, during the time set for his trial, then he was debtor to his own faithfulness, which is necessarily engaged to perform whatever it hath promised. Again, death was the natural wages of sin, though there had been no covenant, and that by the rule of justice, which plainly requires that man should be dealt with as he has done. But man having given consent, however tacit, and not expressed in so many words, which yet is equivalent to a formal consent to the covenant, implying the threatening, the Lord proceeds not by simple justice, but by express formal covenant, in punishing for the breach of it. But we may consider the reason of God the Almighty Creator and

Lawgiver's entering into a covenant with man a little more particularly, and that to the end our hearts may be impressed with a just sense of the glorious perfections of the great God, and the great goodness shewn to man in that whole transaction. I say, then, that God was pleased to deal with man by way of covenant, for two very important ends, the manifestation of his own glory, and man's greater good.

1. For his own glory, which is the supreme end of all his actions. More particularly,

(1.) To display the lustre of his manifold or variegated wisdom, Eph. iii. 10. This way of dealing was the most effectual method for securing man's obedience: for the covenant being a mutual engagement between God and his creature, as it gave him infallible assurance to strengthen his faith, so it was the sweetest bond to preserve his felicity. Divine wisdom shines clearly, in suiting the method of dealing to the nature of the reasonable creature, which was to be led with its own consent. It is true, the precept alone is binding upon man by virtue of the authority of the imposer; but man's own consent increases the obligation, twisting the cords of the law, and binding them more strongly to obedience. Thus Adam was God's servant by the condition of his nature, and also by his own choice, accepting the covenant, from which he could not recede, without the guilt and infamy of the worst perfidy. The terms of the covenant were such as became the parties concerned, God and man: it established an inseparable connection between duty and happiness; as is plain from the sanction, *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

(2.) To shew his wonderful moderation. For though he be Sovereign Monarch of the world, and has absolute power over all creatures to dispose of them as he pleases; yet, in covenanting with man, he sweetly tempered his supremacy and sovereign power, seeking as it were to reign with man's consent. And when, by virtue of his sovereign authority and absolute right, he might have enjoined harder terms to man, and those too altogether just and righteous, he chose to use so much moderation, that he would require nothing of man, but that which man himself should judge, and behoved in reason to be a just and easy yoke; and which, in accepting the terms, he acknowledged to be such.

(3.) For the praise of the glory of his grace. It was free:

condescension on God's part to make such a promise to man's obedience. He might have required obedience from him by virtue of his sovereignty, as his Lord and Maker, without binding himself by any promise to reward his service. All that he was capable to do was but mere duty to his Creator; and when he had done all that was commanded him, it was no more than what he was bound to do as God's creature. It was simply impossible for man to merit any thing at God's hand. It must be owned, there was much grace in this transaction, in that God entered into terms of agreement with man, not his equal, but his own creature, and the work of his hands; and in promising him a reward for his service, which was due to God by the law of creation previous to that federal deed, and so great a reward, even eternal life, between which and the work there was no proportion.

(4.) For venting his boundless love, in the communications of his goodness to man. For God did not create man or angels because he needed them, but that there might be proper objects for receiving the displays of his goodness. Nor did he enter into a covenant with man from any natural necessity, but on design of communicating his bounty to him, Deut. vii. 7, 8. Ezek. xvi. 8. Though the Lord might have exacted all that obedience and service from man, which possibly he could yield, and reduced him into his first nothing by annihilation at last, or at least not have bestowed everlasting happiness upon him, not bound himself by covenant whereby he might expect it; yet, to shew the greatness of his goodness and love, he chose a way to reward that service in a most bountiful manner, which otherwise was due to him.

(5.) For the manifestation of his truth and faithfulness in keeping covenant with his creature, which could not otherwise have been so gloriously discovered. God had made illustrious displays of his wisdom, power, and goodness, in the creation of all things, and in that excellent piece of workmanship, man, the chief of his works in this world; but his faithfulness and veracity could not have been known, at least in its effects, without some such transaction.

(6.) That he might be the more cleared and justified in resenting the injuries done him by the disobedience of his creature, with whom he had condescended to deal so graciously. For the more condescension and goodness there is

on God's part, the greater ingratitude appears on man's part in trampling on the divine goodness. But,

2. God condescended to enter into covenant with man for man's greater good:

(1.) That thereby he might put the higher honour upon him. It was indeed a very distinguishing respect put upon man to be an ally of heaven, and the confederate friend of God. If it be an honour for a mean country peasant to be joined in a formal bond of friendship with a prince or potentate on earth, how much greater honour and dignity was it unto man to be joined in a bond of love and friendship with God, the Supreme Monarch of the whole world?

(2.) To bind him the faster to his duty: The Lord knew man's mutable state, and how slippery and inconstant the heart of man is, where confirming grace is not vouchsafed; therefore, to prevent this inconstancy incident to man, a finite creature, and to establish him in his obedience, he laid him under a covenant-obligation to his service. Man was bound to obey God by virtue of his creation; but his making a covenant with man, which he willingly consented to, was a superadded tie to bind him the faster to his duty. By the covenant that was made with Adam, he had a kind of help to make him the more careful to observe the law which was written on his heart, and a prop to make him stand the more fixed and steady. For, on the one hand, he was warned of his danger in case of disobedience, that so he might beware of offending God; and, on the other, he was encouraged to serve his Maker with the greater alacrity, from the greatness of the reward set before him, and the greatness of the punishment threatened in case he should disobey: both which tended notably to incline him to constancy in his duty.

(3.) That his obedience might be more cheerful, being that unto which he had willingly tied himself. God chose to rule man by his own consent, rather than by force. An absolute law might have extorted obedience from man, but a covenant made it appear more free and willing. It made man's obedience look as if it were the result of his own choice, rather than of any obligation lying upon him. This tended much to the honour of God; for one volunteer that goeth to the war, doth honour the service more than ten soldiers pressed by force:

(4.) For his greater comfort and encouragement. By this he might clearly see what he might expect from God as a reward of his diligence and activity in his service.

(5.) That he might manifest himself to him, and deal with him the more familiarly. The dealing by way of covenant is the way of dealing betwixt man and man that hath least of distance in it, and most of familiarity, wherein parties come near to each other with greatest freedom. There is more nearness and familiarity in this than in any other way whereby God hath expressed his will. It is a more familiar way than that of commands and precepts, which imports nothing but authority and sovereignty. Yea, it is more familiar than the way of absolute promises, which might indeed set forth God's abundant goodness, but not so much God's familiar condescension, as the way of a covenant, when so great and so glorious a Majesty stoops to treat and deal by reciprocal engagements with so mean a creature as man, who is sprung of dust.

I come now to make some practical improvement of this subject.

1. See here the great and wonderful condescension of God, who was pleased to stoop so low as to enter into a covenant with his own creature. Though he is infinitely great and glorious in himself, the fountain of his own blessedness, the glass of his own beauty, and the throne of his own glory; yet he condescended to treat with mean man in a way of covenant. How astonishing is it that God should make a covenant with dust and ashes; and that he should bind himself to man, to give him life and happiness as the reward of his obedience, which he owed to God by the law of his creation?

2. See what a glorious condition man was in when God entered into a covenant with him. He was placed in a pleasant and delightful place, where he was furnished with every conveniency he could desire. He was conformed to God in holiness. Light sparkled in his understanding, sanctity shined in his will, and his affections were regular and pure. He had familiar intimacy and communion with his Maker, and conversed as freely with him as a favourite with his prince. As he enjoyed the light of the sun in paradise to cherish and refresh his body, so he had the light of God's countenance to solace and delight his soul. Thus happy was man: but, ah! he is now fallen like a star from heaven.

3. See that God is very just in all that comes on man. He set him up with a good stock, in a noble case, making him his covenant-party. He gave him the noblest undeserved encouragement to continue in his obedience, and told him his hazard if he should disobey. So that falling he is left without excuse, his misery being entirely owing to himself.

4. See the deplorable condition of all Adam's posterity by reason of the breach of this covenant. They are under the curse of the law, which is an universal curse, and discharges its thunder against every person who is naturally under that covenant, and has not changed his state.

5. This serves to humble all flesh, and beat down the pride of all created glory, under the serious consideration of the great loss we have sustained by Adam's fall, and the sad effects thereof upon us. We have lost all that is good and valuable, the image and favour of God, and have incurred the wrath and displeasure of a holy God.

6. See the unsearchable riches of divine grace, in providing a better covenant for the recovery and salvation of fallen man. The duty of the first covenant is now impossible, and the penalty of it intolerable. It admits of no repentance, nor accepts of any short endeavours; but leaves sinful man as a malefactor in the hands of the law. Blessed be God for the revelation of the covenant of grace, wherein life and salvation is freely provided and offered to fallen man through the obedience and satisfaction of the second Adam. Well may it be called a covenant of grace: for it came from the rich and free grace of God, as its true spring; it is all bespangled with gracious promises, as the heavens are with stars; and all the blessings contained in it are gratuitous and free, such as men cannot plead any right or title unto by any merit or works of their own. When the angels sinned, God expelled them from heaven, and left them to perish in their misery; but he was graciously pleased to enter into a covenant with his Son, as second Adam, for the recovery of fallen man, who by his obedience and death hath fulfilled the law, and suffered the penalty thereof, and thereby made ample provision for all the wants and miseries of poor sinners.

7. There is no wonder, that however little good is wrought in the world, yet working to win heaven is so frequent. We have sufficient evidence of the covenant of

works being made with man as a public person, seeing it is yet natural to us to do that we may live, and to think that God will accept us for our works sake.

8. See your misery, all ye that are out of Christ. This covenant is your way to heaven, which is now impossible. Tell not of your good meanings and desires, your repentance, and your obedience, such as it is; and think not to get life, salvation, and acceptance thereby. For the covenant ye are under admits of no repentance, no will for the deed. It requires nothing less than perfect obedience, which ye are incapable to give,

9. *Lastly*, Therefore give over this way of seeking life by the broken covenant of works, and come to the Lord Jesus Christ; lay hold on the better covenant, and come up to Christ's chariot, Cant. iii. 9, 10. which will drive you safely to eternal life and glory. That chariot which the first Adam drove, went not far till it was all shattered, and made unfit to carry any to heaven. It breaks with the weight of the least sin; and so ye can never think it will drive to heaven with you, Rom. viii. But come into the chariot of the covenant of grace, and ye will be safely carried in it to the land of eternal rest and glory*.

OF THE FALL OF OUR FIRST PARENTS.

GEN. iii. 6, 7.—*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

GOD made man upright, but he sought out many inventions. Man being in honour, abode not. He soon fell from the happy and holy state in which he was created. In the text we have three things to be considered.

* A more full and particular account of the covenant of works may be seen in the author's treatise on that subject, first published in 1772, being a work composed posterior to these catechetical discourses.

1. The fall of our first parents from their state of primitive integrity; It was by their both eating of the forbidden fruit, and consequently sinning against God, ver. 6. And they were immediately sensible that they were fallen from that holy and happy state, ver. 7. This appears two ways. (1.) By their knowledge of their nakedness. Some suppose, that their bodies, before their fall, had a divine glory and lustre on them, which was immediately taken away when they sinned, and they saw that this beautiful covering was now gone. Most part of interpreters understand it of their seeing their nakedness with grief and shame, from a sense of their guilt contracted, and of that sinful concupiscence they found now working in them. Thus the eyes of their minds were opened, which Satan had blinded before. (2.) By their going about to cover their bodies with the broad leaves of the fig-tree. All this clearly holds forth their sense, though it was no holy sense, of their shameful fall.

2. That action by which they fell, their sinning against God, ver. 6. viz. by eating the forbidden fruit. They broke God's express command, forbidding them, under pain of death, to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And immediately after this wicked deed they saw they were naked.

3. How they fell. They fell of their own free-will being left to their freedom, ver. 6. *The woman saw that the tree was good for food, &c.* There was no force or compulsion here; all proceeded from free choice. Their eyes saw the fruit, their hearts coveted it, their hands took it, and their mouths ate it.

The doctrinal truth deducible from the text is,

Doct. 'Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created by sinning against God.'

Two things are here to be considered.

I. The fall of our first parents.

II. How or what way they fell.

I. Let us consider the fall of our first parents. And here I will shew,

1. That man is fallen.

2. Whereby he fell, or what cast him down,

3. What he fell from.

First, I am to shew that man is fallen, and that our first parents did not continue in the estate wherein they were created, but fell from it. This is clear,

1. From the express narrative of this fatal event given by Moses, Gen. iii. from which it appears, that the devil entering into a serpent, artfully tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, in direct opposition to the express command of God, prohibiting it under a dreadful penalty; that she prevailed upon Adam to follow her example; that they were both immediately stung with remorse and horror for what they had done; and perceiving themselves to be naked, they fell a-sewing fig-leaves together for a covering to their bodies; that hearing the voice of the Lord God in the garden, they did, as an evidence of their guilt, and of the privation of light in their minds, hide themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden; that being called to account for their conduct, the woman threw the blame on the serpent, and the man on the woman; and that both received sentence from their offended Creator and Judge, expressive of their future misery; though at the same time God was pleased to give them a revelation of the method of salvation by a Redeemer, in the promise respecting the seed of the woman bruizing the serpent's head. All this amounts to a plain proof that man has fallen from the holy and happy state he was placed in at his creation.

2. From the doleful experience of their posterity, Rom. v. 12. 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all man, for that all have sinned.' When we see the whole race of mankind born beggars, surely we may conclude that their father became bankrupt; for he once had a happy portion to transmit to his posterity, which he foolishly squandered away. And the misery attending upon us now, is, that we are pursued for our father's debt as well as our own, without having a farthing to pay.

Secondly, We may inquire, How did Adam fall, or what cast him down? It was his sinning against God. While our first parents held with God, they stood; but when they departed from him, they fell. What their sin was more particularly, will fall to be shewn afterwards. They thought to rise by their sin, affecting to be as gods, Gen. iii. 5, 6. but it was their ruin. Seeking more, they lost what they had.

Thirdly, It may be asked, What did they fall from? The state wherein they were created. Now, this was a state of the greatest holiness and felicity. When they sinned,

1. They fell from a holy into a sinful state. They lost the image of God. Observe the opposition betwixt the image of God and that of Adam, Gen v. 1, 3. There we are told, 'that God made man in his own likeness,' or image; and that Adam beget a son 'in his own likeness,' even Seth, from whom the whole human race is sprung. Sin was a turning from God as their chief end, and making themselves their chief end; whereby all their uprightness behoved to be lost. It broke the whole law of God at one touch, and violently struck against God and man's neighbour, that is, his posterity; and so could not but waste and defile the conscience. This was the sense of the threatening, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' And in this unholy state are all born of the first man.

(1.) They lost their knowledge, and fell under horrible blindness. Witness their fig-leaf cover for shrouding their nakedness, and their hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord, Gen. iii. 7. 8. A plain indication of their falling into dreadful ignorance of the Divine Being, the opposite of that great knowledge they had of him in their primitive state of integrity.

(2.) They lost the righteousness of their will, Eccl. vii. 29. And they fell under an aversion to God. Witness their running away from him, ver. 8. their excusing their sin, transferring the guilt every one off themselves, till it landed at length on God himself, ver. 12.

(3.) They lost the holiness of their affections, which immediately fell into confusion and disorder. Witness their covering their nakedness. While they were innocent, though naked, they were not ashamed; but that jewel being gone, the irregularity of their affections began to appear in discovering themselves to be naked, by the evil operation of concupiscence in their minds.

2. They fell from their happy state into a miserable one. O what a fearful overturn was made by their sin.

(1.) Horror of conscience seizes them, ver. 8. appearing in flying from the divine presence; which nothing but guilt, clapping as a serpent about them, could have induced them to do. Death was threatened in case of transgression, Gen.

ii. 17. They both die spiritually, and are bound with the pords of temporal and eternal death.

(2.) They are driven out of paradise, excommunicated and declared incapable of communion with God in the tree of life in the garden, Gen. iii. 23. 'The Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden,' as a divorced woman out of the house of her husband, as the word signifies. Nay; God drove out the man, expelling him from that pleasant and delightful place, which he had forfeited by his transgression, ver. 24:

(3.) The woman, the first transgressor, is condemned to sorrow and pain in breeding, bearing, and bringing forth children, ver. 16. which, as some observe, is greater in women than other creatures. And frequently women lose their lives in the case.

(4.) She is put under a yoke of subjection to her husband, ver. 16. Not but that the woman was subject to him before, but it was to a gentle and loving guide: but now all her desires are subjected to her husband, to grant them or deny them as he sees fit, because she eat of the forbidden fruit without asking his advice; which now, because of his and her corruption, becomes a heavy yoke:

(5.) The ground is cursed for man's sake; under the influence of which curse it is barren of wholesome fruits, which it does not yield without heavy labour and diligent cultivation, but fruitful in noxious plants, as thorns and thistles; ver. 17:

(6.) Man is condemned to singular anxiety, to weary, toilsome, and oftentimes fruitless labour, whether it be the labour of the hands or of the mind, ver. 17, 19.; for this last is to be taken into the account too, as appears from Eccl. i. 13, 18. 'I gave my heart (says the preacher), to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travel hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.'

II. Let us next consider, how or what way upright man fell. It was so that our first parents sinned, being left to the freedom of their own will. For understanding of this let us consider the following things:

. 1. That our first parents had a freedom of will: Freedom

of will is a liberty in the will, whereby of its own accord, freely and spontaneously, without any force upon it, it chuses or refuses what is proposed to it by the understanding. And this freedom of will man hath in whatever state he be. But there is a great difference of the freedom of will in the different states of man. In the natural corrupt state, man has a free will only to evil, Gen. vi. 5. 'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.' Eph. ii. 1. 'He is dead in trespasses and sins.' He freely chuseth evil without any force on his will; and he cannot do otherwise, being under the bondage of sin. In the state of grace, man has a free-will, partly to good and partly to evil. Hence the apostle says, Rom. vii. 22. 24. 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.' In this state the will sometimes chuses that which is good, and sometimes that which is evil. This freedom of will is in all regenerate persons who have in some measure recovered the image of God: They chuse good freely by virtue of a principle of grace wrought in them by the sanctifying operations of the Divine Spirit; yet through the remainders of corruption that abides in them, their wills are sometimes inclined to that which is evil. In the state of glory, man has a free will to good only. In this state the blessed chuse good freely; and being confirmed in a holy state, they cannot sin.

The freedom of will that man had in the state of innocence was different from all these. In that state he had a freedom of will both to good and evil; and so had a power wholly to chuse good, or wholly to chuse evil; which differences it from the freedom of will in the state of grace. He had a free will to good, yea, the natural set of his will was to good only, Eccl vii. 29. being 'made upright;' but it was liable to change through the power of temptation, and so free to evil also, as mournful experience has evidenced. Man was created holy and righteous, and received a power from God constantly to persevere in goodness, if he would; yet the act of perseverance was left to the choice and liberty of his own will. To illustrate this a little, we may observe some resemblance of it in nature. God creates the eye, says one, and puts into it the faculty of seeing, and withal he adds to the

eye necessary helps by the light of the sun. As for the act of seeing; it is left to man's liberty; for he may see if he will, and if he will he may shut his eyes. The physician, again, by his art procures an appetite, and provides convenient food for the patient: but the act of eating is in the pleasure of the patient; for he may eat, or abstain from it if he will. Thus God gave Adam strength and power to persevere in righteousness, but the will he left to himself.

Let no man quarrel, that God made Adam liable to change in his goodness; for if he had been unchangeably holy, he behoved to be so either by nature or by free grace; if by nature, that were to make him God; if of free grace, then there was no wrong done him in with-holding what was not due. And he would have got the grace of confirmation, if he had stood the time of his trial.

Secondly, God left our first parents to the freedom of their own will; and was in no respect the cause of their falling.

1. The Lord did not withdraw any of that strength and ability which he had bestowed upon them in their creation. There was no subtraction of any grace that was requisite for their standing. God is not like man to give and recal again; for his gifts are without repentance. Adam left God before he was forsaken by him.

2. The Lord did not infuse any vicious inclinations into man. There was no internal impulsion from God, exciting him to eat the forbidden fruit. He neither moved him to sin, nor approved of it, but forbade it under the severest penalty. It is altogether inconsistent with the divine purity to incline the creature to sin. As God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempteth he any man. It is extremely injurious to his infinite wisdom to think, that he would deface and spoil that admirable work which he had composed with so much design and counsel. And it is highly dishonourable to his immense goodness. He loved his creature, the master piece of his works; and love is an inclination to do good. It was impossible, therefore, that God should induce man to sin, or withdraw that power from him which was necessary to resist the temptation, when the consequence must be his inevitable ruin.

But by their being left to the freedom of their own will, we are to understand God's with-holding of that further

grace (which he was nowise bound to give them) that would have infallibly prevented their falling into sin. God only permitted this fall. No doubt he could have hindered either Satan to tempt, or man to have yielded; but in his holy wise providence, without which a sparrow cannot fall, far less all mankind, he permitted Satan to tempt, that is, he did not hinder him, which he was not obliged to do. It was in man's power to continue in his obedience or not. God was not obliged to hinder his fall. As he brings light out of darkness, order out of confusion and life out of death, so he knew how to bring good out of evil, and glory to himself out of man's fall. Adam's fall was perfectly voluntary; his own will was the sole cause of it, as will plainly appear, if you consider.

(1.) That while he continued innocent, he had a sufficient power to persevere in his holy state. God created him with a perfection of grace. If he had pleased, he might have effectually resisted the temptation and continued stedfast in his duty to God; and God was under no obligation to give him that further actual grace which would have effectually kept him up. And this grace he was bound neither to give nor continue with him.

(2.) That the devil did only allure, he could not ravish his consent. Though his malice be infinite, yet his power is restrained and limited by the omnipotent hand of Jehovah, that he cannot fasten an immediate, much less an irresistible, impression on the will. He therefore made use of an external object to invite man to sin. Now, objects have no constraining force: they are but partial agents, and derive all their efficacy from the faculty into which they are agreeable. And although now, in our fallen state, sin hath so disordered the flesh, that there is great difficulty in resisting those objects that pleasantly insinuate themselves; yet, in the state of innocence, there was such an universal rectitude in Adam, and so entire a subjection of the sensual appetite to the superior power of reason, that he might have obtained an easy conquest. A resolute negative had made him victorious; by a strong denial, he had baffled that proud spirit.

(3.) That Adam's disobedience was the effect of his own choice. For a specious object was conveyed through the unguarded sense to his fancy, and from that to his understanding, which, by a vicious careless neglecting to consider the

danger, commended it to the will, and, and that resolved to embrace it. Now, it is plain and undeniable, that the action which resulted from the direction of the mind, and the choice of the will, was absolutely free. Besides, as the regret that is mixed with an action is a certain character that the person is under restraint; so the delight that attends it is a clear evidence that he is free. When the appetite is drawn by the lure of pleasure, the more violent, the more voluntary is its motion. Now, the representation of the forbidden fruit was under the notion of pleasure: *The woman saw that the fruit was good for food, (that is, pleasurable to the palate), pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise, that is, to increase knowledge, which is the pleasure of the mind; and these allectives drew her into the snare. Man was under no necessity to sin. Force and co-action are inconsistent with the nature of the will, and entirely destroys it. Adam might have continued in his obedience if he had pleased. The devil had no power over him to disturb his felicity. He prevailed against him by a simple suasion.*

Thirdly, The devil tempted our first parents to sin. The devil in the serpent set on man while he stood. Where observe,

1. It was a true serpent which the devil appeared in. What sort of a serpent it was, is not determined: but it seems to have been a beautiful creature of a shining colour: for in Deut. viii. 15. there are serpents spoken of that are in the Hebrew called *Seraphim*, the very name given to angels, which were wont to appear in a splendid form, it may be like these seraphim; and so Eve might take the serpent for one of these good angels. But Moses' plain historical narrative leaves no room to doubt that it was a real serpent, representing it to be more subtle than any beast of the field, and as cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field, after the transgression, when it was condemned to go upon its belly, and to eat dust all the days of its life, Gen. iii. 1, 14. And it is known that the Egyptians, by the devil's instigation, worshipped serpents. And in the old Greek mysteries they used to carry about a serpent, and cry *Eueh*: A sign of the extraordinary service it had done to the devil.

2. Though Moses makes no mention of the devil in this affair, yet surely he was the prime instrument in this fatal seduction. For seeing serpents cannot speak, and far less

reason, we may easily conclude it was the devil, who therefore is called 'the old serpent, and a liar and murderer from the beginning,' John viii. 44. See Gen. iii. 15. Compare Heb. ii. 14. The devil then, one, perhaps the chief, of those rebellious spirits, who by a furious ambition had raised a war in heaven, and were fallen from their obedience and glorious state, designing to corrupt man, and make him a companion with them in their revolt, set about this work, urged by two strong and powerful passions, hatred and envy.

(1.) The devil was prompted to this action by an implacable hatred against God. For being fallen under a final and irrevocable doom, he looked upon God as an irreconcilable enemy; and not being able to injure his essence, he struck at his image; as the fury of some beast discharges itself at the picture of a man. He singled out Adam as the mark of his malice, that, by seducing him from his duty, he might defeat God's design, which was to be honoured by man's free and cheerful obedience; and so to eclipse the lustre of his excellencies as though he had made man in vain.

(2.) He was solicited by envy, the first native of hell. For having lost the friendship and favour of God, and being cast out of heaven, the happy region of blessedness and joy, the sight of Adam's felicity highly exasperated and accented his grief, that man, who by the condition of his nature was inferior to him, should be prince of the world, and the special friend and favourite of heaven, whilst he himself was a miserable prisoner, under those fatal chains which restrained and tormented him, the power and the wrath of God. This made his state and condition more intolerable. His torment was incapable of any allay, but by rendering man as miserable as himself. And as hatred excited his envy, so envy inflamed his hatred, and both joined together in mischief. And being thus pushed on, his subtilty, being equal to his malice, he contrives a temptation which might be most taking and dangerous to man in his raised and happy state. As soon as Adam was invested with all his glory, the devil, as it were, would dethrone him on the day of his coronation, and bring both him and all his posterity under a curse. Here I shall consider the temptation which was the occasion of man's fall, and the devil's subtilty in managing it.

1. As to the temptation itself, it was very suitable and promising. The devil attempted to seduce him by art, in his

propounding the lure of knowledge and pleasure, to inveigle the spiritual and sensitive appetites at once. There were three things in which the desirableness of this fruit was represented, which sets forth the great art and sagacity of Satan.

(1.) Its agreeableness to the palate. It is said, *The woman saw the fruit that it was good for food.* Satan told her that it was of a most sweet and delicious taste, and would highly gratify her sensual appetite.

(2.) *It was pleasant to the eye*; a charming and beautiful fruit, which had an inviting aspect.

(3.) There was a desirableness in it to the rational appetite, *It was a tree to be desired to make one wise.* And the serpent told her, ver. 5. that, upon eating it, *their eyes should be opened, and they should be as gods, knowing good and evil.* He made Eve believe, that, upon her eating the fruit of that tree, she would be raised and elevated from the human to a kind of divine nature and condition. This was the temptation with which the devil assaulted our first parents in paradise, and prevailed against them.

2. I shall take notice of Satan's subtilty in managing this temptation. We read of his wiles in scripture; and indeed they are worse than his darts.

(1.) That he might the better succeed in his hellish design, he addressed himself to the woman, the weakest person, and most liable to seduction. He reckoned, and that justly enough, that his attempt would be most successful here, and that she was less able to resist him. He broke over the hedge where it was weakest. He knew very well that he could more easily insinuate and wind himself into her by a temptation. An old experienced soldier, when he is to storm and enter a castle, observes carefully where there is a breach, or how he may enter with most facility: so did Satan here when he assaulted Eve, the weaker vessel. And he tempted the woman first, because he knew, if once he could prevail with her, she would easily entice and draw on her husband. Satan knew very well, that a temptation coming to Adam from Eve, his wife, in this the infancy of their married state, would be more prevailing and less suspected. Sometimes near relations prove strong temptations. A wife may be a snare, when she dissuades her husband from his duty, or entices him to sin. It is said of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 25. that

‘there was none like unto him, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.’ She blew the coals, and made his sin flame out with the greater violence. Satan discovered his great subtilty in tempting Adam by his wife; for he with complacency received the temptation, and, by the enticement of this old serpent, committed adultery with the creature, from whence the cursed race of sin and all miseries proceed.

(2.) He assaulted her when alone, in the absence of her husband, and so did the more easily prevail. For ‘two are better than one;’ and, as Solomon observes, ‘a threefold cord is not easily broken.’ Had Adam been present at this fatal congress, it is like the attempt had not been so easily successful.

(3.) The devil’s subtilty may be seen here in hiding himself in the body of a serpent, which, before sin entered into the world was not terrible to Eve. Satan crept into a serpent, and spake in it, as the angel did afterwards in Balaam’s ass. She was not afraid of this apparition; for she knew no guilt, and therefore was not subject to any fear. She might look upon this as one of the angels or blessed spirits, which, as they used after this to appear in the shape of men, why might not one of them appear now, and converse with her in the shape of a beautiful serpent; why might not she freely discourse with this, which she reckoned one of those good angels, to whose care and tuition both she and her husband were committed? For we may suppose the fall of the angels was not yet revealed to her, and she thought this to be a good spirit, otherwise she would certainly have declined all conversation with an apostate angel. Some have supposed, and that not very improbably, that more discourse passed between the serpent and Eve than is recorded, Gen. iii. and represent the matter thus: The serpent, catching the opportunity of the woman’s being at a distance from her husband, makes his address to her with a short speech, saluting her as empress of the world, and giving her a great many encomiums and dignifying titles: She wonders, and inquires what this meant? and whether he was not a brute creature? and how he came to be endowed with understanding and speech? The serpent replies, that he was nobler than a brute, and did indeed once want both these gifts; but by eating a certain fruit in this garden, he had got both. She imme-

diately asks what fruit and tree that was which had such a surprising influence and virtue. Which when he had shewed her, she replied; This no doubt is an excellent fruit, but God hath strictly forbidden us the use of it. To which the serpent presently replies, as in the close of ver. 1. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" The way how these words are introduced plainly shews that something had passed previous thereto. And some suppose, that the serpent, to confirm the truth of his assertion, pulled off some of the fruits of the tree, ate one in her presence, and presented another to Eve, who, before eating it, had the discourse with the serpent recorded in the subsequent verses.

(4.) The devil's subtilty appears in accosting our first parents so early, before they were confirmed in their course of obedience. The holy angels in heaven are fully confirmed in righteousness and holiness; they are called *morning stars*; Job xxxviii. 7. and are all fixed, not wandering stars. But our first parents were not confirmed in their obedience, they were not yet fixed in their orb of holiness. Though they had a possibility of standing, yet they had not an impossibility of falling. They were holy but mutable. It was possible for them to change their state. Now, Satan's subtilty was eminently manifested here.

(5.) He first allures with the hopes of impunity, and then he promises an universal knowledge of good and evil.

(1.) He persuades Eve, that though she did eat of the forbidden tree: yet she should not die, ver. 4. 'Ye shall not surely die.' 'God indeed did say so for your terror, to keep you in awe. But do not entertain such hard and unworthy thoughts of that God who is infinitely good and gracious. Do not think that, for such a trifle as the eating of a little fruit, he will undo you and all your posterity for ever, and so suddenly destroy the most excellent piece of his own workmanship, wherein his image shines in a most resplendent manner.'

(2.) He promiseth them an universal knowledge, as the effect of eating this fruit, ver. 5. 'For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened: and ye shall be as god's, knowing good and evil.' 'God's design in that prohibition is only this: He knows that you shall be so far from dying, that thereby you shall certainly be entered into a new and more noble and excellent

kind of life. The eyes of your understandings, which are now shut in a great measure as to the knowledge of many things, shall then be wide opened, and ye shall see more clearly and distinctly than now you do. You shall be as God, and shall attain to a kind of omniscience.'

(6.) Satan's subtilty was manifested here, in assauilting Eve's faith. He would persuade her, that God had not spoken truth in that threatening. He managed the whole business with a lie; yea, he adds one lie to another. 'Ye shall not surely die,' says he; and then he represents God as envying our first parents that great honour and happiness that was attainable by them, ver 5. and himself as one that wished their happiness, and would tell her how to arrive at it; and alleges they might easily understand, by the very name of the tree, the truth of what he says to her. 'It is (says he) because God envies your felicity that he hath forbidden you the use of this tree. But know ye, if ye eat of it, ye shall be as gods.' Here was subtilty indeed. The devil was first a liar, and then a murderer. This was Satan's master-piece to weaken her faith; for when he had shaken that, and brought her once to distrust, then she was easily overcome: and presently put forth her hand to pluck the forbidden fruit. By these pretences he ruined innocence itself: for the woman being deceived by these affectives, swallowed down the poison of the serpent; and having tasted death herself, she betook herself to her husband, and persuaded him by the same means to despise the law of their Creator.

Thus sin made its entrance into the world, and brought a universal confusion into it. For the moral harmony of the world consisting in the just subordination of the several ranks of beings to one another, and of all to God, when man, who was placed next to him, broke the union, his fall brought a desperate disorder into God's government. And though the matter of the offence may seem small, yet the disobedience was infinitely great; it being the transgression of that command which was given to be the real proof of man's subjection to God. The honour and majesty of the whole law was violated in the breach of that symbolical precept. But this will fall to be more fully illustrated in a subsequent discourse.

Fourthly, Man being thus left to the freedom of his own will, abused his liberty in complying with the temptation,

and freely apostatised from God. And so man himself, and he only, was the true and proper cause of his own sinning. Not God, for he is unchangeably holy; not the devil, for he could only tempt, not force: therefore man himself only is to blame, Eccl. vii. 29. 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.'

I shall conclude this subject with a few inferences.

1. Hence see the great weakness, yea the nothingness of the creature, when left to itself. When Adam was in the state of integrity, he quickly made a defection from God, he soon lost the robe of his primitive innocence, and all the blessedness of paradise. If our nature was so weak when at the best, then how miserably weak is it now when it is at its worst? If Adam did not stand when he was perfectly holy and righteous, how unable are we to stand when sin has entirely disabled us? If purified nature could not resist the temptation, but was quite overturned at the first blast, how shall corrupt nature stand, when besieged and stormed with a long succession of strong and violent assaults? If Adam in a few hours sinned himself out of paradise, O how quickly would even those who are regenerated sin themselves into hell, if they were not preserved by a greater power than their own; nay, 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation?' God left some of the angels to themselves, and they turned devils; and he left innocent Adam, and he fell into a gulf of misery. May we not then much more now say, 'Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall;' especially seeing we have a violent bent and strong propensity of heart and will to go away from God, which Adam had not.

2. There is no reason to blame God for the misery of the fall. He gave man sufficient power and ability to stand if he would, promised a large reward to excite his obedience, and severely threatened disobedience: but man would needs try experiments to make his case better than God made it; and so fell by his own inventions. The fault then was his own, he alone was culpable, and he was the author of his own ruin.

3. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. You see that you have to do with an impudent devil, who is still going about seeking whom he may devour. No state, while ye are in this world, can secure you from his temptations.

Though ye be in a state of reconciliation and friendship with God, ye are not secure from his assaults. No place, though it were a paradise, can protect you. He has malice enough to push you on to the most atrocious sins; subtilty and experience, acquired by hellish art in the course of some thousand years, to suit his baits so as they may best take with you. Do not parley with the tempter: listening to him may bring on doubting, and doubting may bring on the denial of God's truths, and so end in full compliance with his horrid temptations, as it did with our first mother.

4. If Adam fell so soon after he was created, and could not be his own keeper, then certainly he can much less be his own saviour. If he could not preserve himself from falling into the gulf, much less can he pull himself out of it again. We are by nature without strength, and have no inclination to that which is good; and therefore God must work powerfully and efficaciously in us. We cannot break the chains and knock off the fetters of sin and Satan, by which we are held. We can make no reparation to the honour of God for the wrongs and indignities we have done him. To Christ alone we must be indebted for all this. We have destroyed ourselves, but in him is our help.

5. There is no justification by the works of the law. Adam broke the covenant of works, and so rendered it impracticable for him or his posterity to attain to life and happiness by it. For it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. iii. 10. 'As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. The law requires a perfect spotless righteousness, but the best righteousness of fallen man is but filthy rags. It is not only torn and ragged, but polluted and defiled. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God: and there is no possibility of obtaining justification by the works of the law now; 'for by the works of the law (says Paul) shall no flesh be justified.'

6. *Lastly*, See your absolute need of Christ; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby ye can be saved. Go not about to establish a righteousness of your own, or seek to get to heaven by any works of your own. That is indeed still the thing man aims at. First he sins, and then, like Adam, sets to work

to cover himself with a cover of his own making, to procure a title to eternal life by his own works. But is it easier to recover yourselves from the ruins of the fall, than to stand while yet in an innocent and upright state? Have ye gathered strength by sinning, and are ye able to walk to heaven on your own legs? Come then to Christ, who by his obedience and death hath procured a righteousness which alone can stand you in stead, and by which alone you can obtain a right to eternal life. Ye must then either come to Christ, or perish for ever.

OF SIN IN GENERAL.

1 JOHN iii. 4.—*Sin is the transgression of the law.*

IN these words we have an answer to that question, ‘What is sin?’ It is a *transgression of the law*: for ‘where no law is, there is no transgression,’ Rom. iv. 15. But because the word *transgression* seems to import something positive and actual, therefore it is added in the Catechism, it is a ‘want of conformity unto the law,’ which is a more general definition: and this meaning the word in the original most properly bears. Hence both a want of conformity unto the law of God, and a transgression of it, are taken into the description; and in effect they are both one thing.

In the further illustration of this subject, it will be proper to shew,

- I. What that law is whereof sin is the transgression.
- II. Wherein the nature of sin consists.
- III. Wherein the evil thereof lies.
- IV. Deduce a few inferences.

I. I am to shew what is that law whereof sin is the transgression. It is the law of God, even any law of his whereby he lays any duty upon any of the children of men, whether it be the natural law which is written even in the hearts of all men, Rom. ii. 15. or the revealed law and will of God, written in the Bible, whether it be the law strictly so called, or the gospel, whose great command is to believe in Christ; the transgression of which command is the great sin of the hearers of the gospel. In a word, the law of which sin is

the transgression, is any law or command of God which he obliges us to obey. More particularly,

1. There is a law engraven upon the hearts of men by nature, which was in force long before the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai. This is the light of reason, and the dictates of natural conscience concerning those moral principles of good and evil, which have an essential equity in them, and shew man his duty to God, to his neighbour, and to himself. There is a law in all men by nature, which is a rule of good and evil. They have notions of right and wrong in their consciences; which is evident by those laws which are common in all nations for the preservation of human society, the encouraging of virtue, and discouraging of vice. These laws are to be found among men who have not the benefit of divine revelation for regulating their lives. Now, what standard else can they have for these but common reason, and the light of nature? Every son and daughter of Adam brings with them into the world a law in their breast; and when reason clears up itself from the clouds of sense, they can distinguish between good and evil, between things which ought to be done, and things which they should avoid. Every man finds a law in his heart that checks and rebukes when he offends, and cherishes and encourages him when he does good. None are without a legal indictment and a legal execution within themselves, Rom. ii. 14, 15.

2. There is another law which was given to the Jewish nation by the ministry of Moses. This is spoken of by Christ, John vii. 19. ‘Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? By this we are to understand the whole system of divine precepts concerning ceremonial rites, judicial processes, and moral duties. Accordingly there was a threefold law given by Moses.

(1.) The ceremonial law, which was a certain system of divine positive precepts, with relation to the external worship of God. It was wholly taken up in injoining those observances of sacrifices and offerings, and various methods of purifications and cleansings which were typical of Christ, and of that sacrifice of his which alone was able to take away sin.

(2.) The judicial law consisted of those institutions

which God prescribed the Jews for their civil government. For, whereas, in other commonwealths, the chief magistrates give laws unto the people; in this the laws for their religion and for their civil government were both divine, and both immediately from God. So that the judicial law was given them to be the standing law of their nation, according to which all actions and suits between party and party were to be tried and determined; as in all other nations there are particular laws and statutes for the decision of controversies that may arise among men.

3. There is the moral law which is a system or body of those precepts which carry an universal and natural equity in them, being so conformable to the light of reason, and the dictates of every man's conscience, that as soon as ever they are declared and understood, we must needs subscribe to the justice and righteousness of them. We have the sum of this law in the ten commandments. This law continues in its full force and power, obliging the conscience as a standing rule for our obedience. Our Lord tells us, Matt. v. 17. that 'he came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them.' The ceremonial law was abolished by the death of Christ, and the judicial law, so far as it concerned the nation of the Jews as a commonwealth and body politic, particularly touching their not marrying out of their own tribes, their not alienating the inheritance of their fathers, the raising up of seed to their deceased brother, &c. but such of these political laws as are common to men in general, and founded upon the law of nature, are still binding and in force, such as the laws for punishing criminals and other offenders, the laws against oppressing of widows, orphans, strangers, the fatherless, &c. These are a standing rule of equity and justice; they are of a moral nature, and therefore of perpetual obligation. So that the law of which sin is the transgression, is to us the law of nature in our hearts, and the moral law contained in the scriptures, and summed up in the decalogue, as well as the positive laws of the gospel of Christ.

II. I proceed to shew wherein the nature of sin consists. It consists in a want of conformity to the law of God, or a disconformity thereto. The law of God is the rule; whatsoever is in or over this rule, is sin. The law of God is set as a mark to us; and so the word *sin* in the first language

properly signifies a not hitting the mark ; and *transgression* is a swerving from the right line, or a going off the way. So it is called 'a going aside,' Psal. xiv. 3. Now, nothing is conformable to the law which is not perfectly so ; for if it be in the least disagreeable thereto, it is not conformable to it, more than that which wants half an inch of an ell is truly an ell of measure ; and therefore any want of that conformity is sin. The law of God requires universal conformity to it. Now the law or command of God requires a twofold conformity.

1. A conformity of the heart to it. It reaches the inward man, seeing God is a spirit, and that omniscient One who knows the heart ; and the whole heart must be subject to him. Therefore our Saviour says, Mark xii. 30. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'

2 A conformity of the life both in words and deeds. Hence says David, Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ? and who shall stand in his holy place ? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart ; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.' And forasmuch as the law requires some things, and forbids other things both in heart and life, the want of conformity to it in these respects, either in heart or life, is sin. Hence we may infer,

1. Sin is no positive being, but a want of due perfection, a defect, an imperfection in the creature ; and therefore it is, (1.) Not from God, but from the creature itself. (2.) It is not a thing to glory in, more than the want of all things. (3.) It is a thing we have reason to be humbled for, and had great need to have removed. (4.) It is not a thing to be desired, but fled from and abhorred, as the abominable thing which God hateth.

2. Original sin is truly and properly sin. Look to yourselves as you came into the world, and ye must smite on your breast, before ye have sucked the breasts, and say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' For we come into it with Adam's sin imputed, Rom. v. 12. stript of original righteousness, and the whole nature corrupted. This is the sin of our nature, being a want of conformity in our souls to the law of God, which requires all moral perfection of us, Matth. v. ult. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your

Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Instead of which we have a bent of soul quite contrary to the law, Rom. viii. 7. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.'

3. The first motions of sin, and the risings of that natural corruption in us, before it be completed with the consent of the will to the evil motion, are truly and properly sin. The apostle calls this *lust*, and distinguishes it from sin, *i. e.* the sin of our nature, and from the consent to it and execution of it, which he calls 'obeying these lusts,' Rom. vi. 12. and tells us that it is condemned by the law, Rom. vii. 7. 'Therefore a thing may be our sin, though we know it not to be so, 1 Tim. i. 13. and though it be not our will, yea though against our will, Rom. vii. 16. For it is neither our knowledge, or opinion, nor our will, but the law of God, that is our rule.'

4. All consent of the heart to and delight in motions towards things forbidden by the law of God are sins, though these never break forth into action, but die where they were born in the inmost corners of our hearts, Matth. v. 28. 'Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Speculative filthiness is a disconformity to the law. There is heart murder as well as actual murder, ver. 22.

5. All omissions of the internal duties we owe to God and our neighbours are sins, as want of love to God or our neighbours. Want of due fear of God, trust and hope in him, &c. are internal sins of omission.

6. Hence a man sins both by undue silence and undue speaking, when the cause of God and truth requires it; seeing the law bids us speak in some cases, but never speak what is not good.

7. Hence also a man's sins, when he omits outward duties that are incumbent on him to perform, as well as when he commits sin of whatever kind in his life.

8. *Lastly*, The least failure in any duty is sin; and whatever comes not up in perfection to the law is sinful. And therefore we sin in every thing we do, and our best duties deserve damnation, and cannot be accepted according to the law. Wherefore the duties of wicked men are absolutely rejected, seeing they are under the law; and the duties of the godly are no otherwise accepted, but as washed in

the blood of Christ, which takes away the sin cleaving to them.

Further, nothing can be a sin but what is a transgressing of the law of God, who only is Lord over the conscience. Therefore, if there be no law of God in the case, there is no transgression affecting the conscience. But it must be considered, that the law of God commands some things expressly, and other things by good consequence. No law of God commands a servant expressly to do such and such a particular piece of work that is lawful, which he is bidden do by his master; but the law of God says, 'Servants, obey your masters;' and therefore it is sin if he do not that work. The case is the same as to men's laws. Therefore the apostle says, Rom. xiii. 5. 'Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience saks.' Now, men's laws are either contrary to God's laws, or agreeable and subservient thereto, as being for the glory of God, or the good of the nation in general. As to the first of these, ye cannot obey without sin, as if the Queen and Parliament should command you to receive human ceremonies in the worship of God. As to other things which are good and just, we are obliged to obey, as is clear from Rom. xiii.; and therefore the conscience is not altogether unconcerned in the laws of men. And therefore, if ye would be tender Christians, before ye go against the laws of the land, consider well whether their commands be unlawful, or whether they be such as are good and just; for doubtless magistrates have a power to make laws for the good of the land in general; and what they so make we are obliged to respect, otherwise we contemn the ordinance of God, and regard not the good of our neighbour, and thereby sin against God; as is acknowledged in the case of those that now export grain, to the general distress of the country. And I apprehend, that if we would lay the case home to ourselves, we would have less liberty than we have in some things that are not scrupled at.

III. I come now to shew wherein the evil of sin lies. It lies,

1. And principally, in the wrong done to God, and its contrariety, (1.) To his nature, which is altogether holy. Hence the Psalmist says, Psal. li. 4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight,' David had exceedingly wronged Uriah in defiling his wife, and procu-

ring the death of himself; yet he considers his great sin in that matter as chiefly against God, and contrary to his holy nature. (2.) In its contrariety to God's will and law, which is a sort of a copy of his nature. And God being all good, and the chief good, sin must needs be a sort of infinite evil.

2. In the wrong it doth to ourselves: 'He that sinneth against me,' says the personal Wisdom of God, 'wrongeth his own soul,' Prov. viii. 36. For, (1.) It leaves a stain and spiritual pollution on the soul, whereby it becomes filthy and vile; and therefore sin is called filthiness, and is said to defile the soul, whereupon follows God's loathing the sinner, Isa. i. 15. and shame and confusion on the sinner himself, Geh. iii. 7. (2.) It brings on guilt, whereby the sinner is bound over to punishment, according to the state in which he is, until his sin be pardoned. This ariseth from the justice of God and the threatening of his law; which brings on all miseries whatsoever.

But more particularly upon this head, when men pass the bounds and limits which God hath set them in his law, then they transgress it. All the violations of negative precepts are transgressions of God's law. The design of the moral law is to keep men within the bounds of their duty; and when they sin they go beyond them. Sin is indeed the greatest of evils; it is directly opposite to God the supreme good. The definition that is given of sin expresses its essential evil. It is the transgression of the divine law, and consequently it opposes the rights of God's throne, and obscures the glory of his attributes, which are exercised in the moral government of the world. God is our King, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. From his right and propriety in us as his creatures, his title to and sovereign power and dominion over us doth arise and flow. Man is endued with the powers of understanding and election, to conceive and choose what is good, and to reject what is evil; is governed by a law, even the declared will of his Maker. Now, sin, being a transgression of this law, contains many evils in it. As,

1. It is high rebellion against the sovereign Majesty of God, that gives the life of authority to the law. Therefore divine precepts are enforced with the most proper and binding motive to obedience, *I am the Lord*. He that commits sin, especially with pleasure and design, implicitly denies his dependence upon God as his Maker and Governor, and ar-

negates to himself an irresponsible liberty to do his own will. This is clearly expressed by those atheistical designers, who said, 'Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?' Psal.

xl. 4. The language of mens actions, which is more convincing than their words, plainly declares, that they despise his commandments, and contemn his authority, as if they were not his creatures and subjects.

2. It is an extreme aggravation of this evil, that sin, as it is a disclaiming our homage to God, so it is in true account a yielding subjection to the devil; for sin is in the strictest propriety his work. The original rebellion in paradise was by his temptation; and all the actual and habitual sins of men, since the fall, are by his efficacious influence. He darkens the carnal mind; he sways and rules the stubborn will; he excites and inflames the vitious affections, and imperiously rules in the children of disobedience. He is therefore stiled the prince and god of this world. And what more contumelious indignity can there be, than to prefer to the glorious Creator of heaven and earth, a damned spirit, the most cursed part of the whole creation? More particularly, sin strikes at the root of all the divine attributes.

(1.) It is contrary to the unspotted holiness of God, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity. Of all the glorious and benign constellations of the divine attributes which shine in the law of God, his holiness hath the brightest lustre. God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works: but the most precious and venerable monument of his holiness is the law. This is a true draught of his image, and a clear copy of his nature and will. It is the perspicuous rule of our duty, without any blemish or imperfection. See what a high encomium the apostle gives it, 'The commandment is holy, just, and good,' Rom. vii. 12. It enjoins nothing but what is absolutely good, without the least mixture and tincture of evil. It is a full and complete rule, in nothing defective, and in nothing superfluous, but comprehends the whole duty of man. The sum of it is set down by the apostle, Tit. ii. 11. We are *to live soberly*, i. e. we are to abstain from every thing that may blemish and stain the excellency of our reasonable nature. We are to live *righteously*. This respects the state and situation wherein God hath placed us in the world for the advancing of his glory. It includes and comprehends in it all the respective duties we owe to others,

to whom we are united by the bands of nature, of civil society, or of spiritual communion. And we are to live *godly*, which takes in all the internal and outward duties which we owe to God, who is the Sovereign of our spirits, whose will must be the rule, and his glory the end of all our actions. In short the law is so contrived and framed, that abstracting from the authority of the Lawgiver, its holiness and goodness lays an eternal obligation upon us to obey its dictates. Now, sin is directly and formally a contrariety to the infinite sanctity and purity of God; consisting in a not doing what the law commands, or in doing that which it expressly forbids; and God cannot look upon it, but with infinite detestation, Hab. i. 13. He cannot but hate that which is opposite to the glory of his nature, and to the lustre of all his perfections.

(2.) Sin vilifies the wisdom of God, which prescribed the law to men as the rule of their duty. The divine wisdom shines resplendently in his laws. They are all framed with an exact congruity to the nature of God, and his relation to us, and to the faculties of man before he was corrupted. And thus the divine law being a bright transcript both of God's will and his wisdom, binds the understanding and will, which are the leading faculties in man, to esteem and approve, to consent to and choose, all his precepts as best. Now, sin vilifies the infinite wisdom of God, both as to the precepts of the law, the rule of our duty, and the sanction annexed to it for confirming its obligation. It taxes the precepts as an unequal yoke, and as too severe and rigid a confinement to our wills and actions. Thus the impious rebels complained of old, 'The ways of the Lord are not equal;' they are injurious to our liberties, they restrain and infringe them, and are not worthy of our study and observation. And it accounts the rewards and punishments which God has annexed as the sanction of the law to secure our obedience to its precepts, weak and ineffectual motives to serve that purpose. And thus it reflects upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver as lame and defective, in not binding his subjects more firmly to their duty.

(3.) Sin is a high contempt and horrid abuse of the divine goodness, which should have a powerful influence in binding man to his duty. His creating goodness is hereby contemned, which raised us out of the dust of the earth unto an excel-

lent and glorious being. Our parents were indeed instrumental in the production of our bodies ; but the variety and union, the beauty and usefulness, of the several parts, was the high design of his wisdom, and the excellent work of his hands. Man's body is composed of as many miracles as members, and is full of wonders. The lively idea and perfect exemplar of that regular fabric was modelled in the divine mind. This affected David with a holy admiration, *Psal. cxxxix. 14, 15, 16.* The soul, or principal part, is of a celestial original, inspired by the Father of Lights. The faculties of understanding and election are the indelible characters of our honour and dignity above the brutes, and make us capable to please God and enjoy our Maker. Now, God's design in giving us our being was to communicate of his own fulness to, and to be actively glorified by intelligent creatures, *Rev. iv. 11.* None are so void of rational sentiments, as not to own, that it is our indispensable duty and reasonable service to offer up ourselves an entire living sacrifice to the glory of God. What is more natural, according to the laws of uncorrupted reason, than that love should correspond with love? As the one descends in benefits, the other should ascend in praise and thankfulness. Now, sin breaks all these sacred bonds of grace and gratitude, which engage us to love and obey our Maker. He is the just Lord of all our faculties, intellectual and sensitive ; and the sinner employs them all as weapons of unrighteousness to fight against God. Again, it is he that upholds and preserves us by the powerful influence of his providence, which is a renewed creation every moment, daily surrounding us with many mercies. All the goodness which God thus bestows upon men, the sinner abuses against him. This is the most unworthy, shameful, and monstrous ingratitude imaginable. This makes forgetful and unthankful men more brutish than the dull ox or stupid ass, who serve and obey those that feed and keep them. Yea it sinks them below the insensible part of the creation, which invariably observes the law and order prescribed by the Creator. This is astonishing degeneracy. It was the complaint of God himself, *Isa. i. 2.* 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.'

(4.) The sinner disparages the divine justice, in promising himself peace and safety, notwithstanding of the wrath and

vengeance that is denounced against him by the Lord. He labours to dissolve the inseparable connexion that God hath placed betwixt sin and punishment, which is not a mere arbitrary constitution, but founded upon the desert of sin, and the infinite rectitude of the divine nature, which unchangeably hates it. The sinner sets the divine attributes a contending as it were with one another, presuming that mercy will disarm justice, and suspend its power by restraining it from taking vengeance upon impenitent sinners. And thus sinners become bold and resolute in their impious courses, like him mentioned, Deut. xxix. 19. who said, 'I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.' This casts such an aspersion on the justice of God, that he solemnly threatens the severest vengeance for it; as you may see in ver. 20. 'The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.'

(5.) Sin strikes against the omniscience of God, and at least denies it implicitly. There is such a turpitude adhering to sin, that it cannot endure the light of the sun, nor the light of conscience, but seeks to be concealed under a mask of virtue or a vail of darkness. What is said of the adulterer and the thief, is true in proportion of every sinner, 'If a man sees them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.' And hence it is, that many who would blush and tremble if they were surprised in their sinful actings by a child or a stranger, are not at all afraid of the eye of God, though he narrowly notices all their sins, in order to judge them, and will judge them in order to punish them.

(6.) *Lastly*, Sin bids a defiance to the divine power. This is one of the essential attributes of God that makes him so terrible to devils and wicked men. He hath both a right to punish and power enough to revenge every transgression of his law that sinners are guilty of. Now, his judicial power is supreme and his executive power is irresistible. He can with one stroke dispatch the body to the grave, and the soul to the pit of hell, and make men as miserable as they are sinful: and yet sinners as boldly provoke him as if there were no danger. We read of the infatuated Syrians, how they foolishly thought that God the protector of Israel had

only power on the hills but not in the valleys; and therefore renewed the war to their own destruction. Thus proud sinners enter the lists with God, and range an army of lusts against the armies of heaven, and, being blindly bold, run on headlong upon their own ruin. They neither believe God's all-seeing eye, nor fear his almighty hand. You see then what an evil sin is in its nature. It is high rebellion against God, and strikes at the root of all his attributes.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. If ye would see your sins, look to the law of God. That is the glass wherein we may see our ugly face. Hence the apostle says, Rom. vii. 7. 'I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.' Look to it for what is past and present, in order to your being humbled in the sight of a holy God. Look to it for your direction, if you would shun the fatal rocks of sin for the time to come. It is not what this or that man says, but what the word of God says, that is to be the rule of your duty.

2. See here what presumption it is in men to make that duty which God has not made so, and that sin which God has not made so in religion. This is for men to set themselves in God's room, and their will for the divine will. This is true superstition, however far the guilty seem to themselves and others to be from it. And in this our dissenters and the Church of England agree, making that duty and sin which God never made so. In this general they agree, however they differ in particulars. This is expressly forbidden, Deut. iv. 2. 'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.' Remarkable is the reason of this prohibition, 'that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.' For to both agrees what our Lord said, Matth. xv. 3. 'Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your traditions?' Witness the deep ignorance of matters of salvation and the power of godliness, wherein many are kept by reason of these principles, which have no footing in the word of God.

3. Flee to Jesus Christ for the pardon of sin, for his blood and Spirit to remove the same. All the waters of the sea will not wash it out, but that blood alone. And repent and forsake your sin, or it will be your ruin. Consider it is the greatest evil. For,

(1.) It is most contrary to the nature of God, who is the greatest good; and that which is most contrary to the greatest good, must needs be the greatest evil. It may be looked on as the nadir to zenith. The devil is not so contrary to God: for God gave the devil a being, but not sin. It is sin that makes the devil opposite to God; it is the master, he the scholar. The fire is hotter than the water which it heats. Sin fights against God; it is a deicide; and, as one says, the sinner so far as in him lies, destroys the nature of God. Sin is a dethroning of God, yea it strikes at his being. It musters up its forces in the open field against God; and when it is beaten from thence, it has its strong holds to go to; yea, like the thief on the cross, when it is crucified, it spits its venom against him. It is a walking contrary to him; and it rises against him even to the last gasp.

(2.) Sin is the mother of all evils that ever were or shall be. It is the big-bellied monster that is delivered daily of all other evils as its births. It is that which has brought forth all the fire-brands that ever were. What cast the angels out, of heaven, or Adam out of paradise? Sin draws the sword against nations, makes women husbandless, mothers childless, and brings on wars, famine and pestilence. Personal evils, whether on soul or body, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, are all from sin. It must needs then be the greatest evil.

(3.) Sin is the concluding stroke of wrath on the soul. It is that to which people are entirely given up. And what is it that makes hell in the world, that God gives as the last stroke after all the rest? Why, it is to give up the soul to sin; Ezek. xxiv. 13. 'Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.' That is the doom, 'Let him that is filthy be filthy still.' He that was delivered up to Satan, was restored again: but we never hear of any being restored who were given up to themselves. Better be given up to the devil than to sin.

OF THE FIRST SIN IN PARTICULAR.

GEN. iii. 6, 7.—*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

IN these words we are distinctly informed how the covenant of works was broken, and our first parents stript of their primitive innocence and integrity. Eve seduced by the devil, first ate of the forbidden fruit, and Adam followed her example. The act being completed by both, they immediately discovered, to their shame and dishonour, the miserable state they were reduced to.

The words sufficiently found the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'Our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, by eating the forbidden fruit.'

I have already shewn why the forbidden tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as also of what use it was in the covenant of works. It remains that we shew,

I. How the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell.

II. Why this fruit was forbidden.

III. The aggravations of it.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew how the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell. It is not to be thought, that they were wholly innocent till they had the forbidden fruit in their mouths; for their covering of it in their hearts behoved of necessity to go before that; but the eating of it was that whereby their sin and apostacy from their Creator was completed. The first step of their sin seems then to be doubting and unbelief of the threatening, **Gen. iii. 4, 6.** Their faith as to the truth of the threatening being first foundered, their heart plied to the temptation; and then succeeded a lust after the forbidden fruit; and then the sin was completed by their actual eating of it, as in the words of the text.

Satan, the old serpent, very artfully laid his train for enticing our first parents to eat this forbidden fruit. For he attacked the woman when alone, at a distance from her husband; he endeavoured to make her doubt of the truth of the divine threatening; he presented the fatal object, as fruit pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise: he pretended a higher regard for them than their sovereign Creator, who, he tacitly insinuated, grudged their happiness: and he used means to persuade them, that they should be like God, in the vast extent of their knowledge, upon their eating the delectable morsel. Thus the eyes of their mind were first blemished by a mist from hell; which being admitted, gradually darkened their understanding, so that first doubting, and then disbelief of the threatening, ensued. Their will was easily conquered to a compliance with the temptation; then a corrupt affection to the tree seized them, discovering itself in a lustful looking at it: then the hand took it, and the mouth ate it, and the fatal morsel was swallowed.

II. I am next to shew why this fruit was forbidden.

1. It was not because God grudged the happiness of our first parents, as the devil blasphemously alleged, whom the event proved a liar, John viii. 44. Nor yet,

2. Because there was any evil in the fruit itself; for that could not be; for we are told, Gen. i. ult. that, at the close of the creation *every thing was very good*. This fruit was not forbidden because it was evil, but it was evil because it was forbidden. It was forbidden for the trial of man's obedience. Not that God knew not what was in man, and what he would be, but to discover the creatures weakness to himself without God, and that he might thence take occasion of advancing his own glory impaired by the sin of man, in a more illustrious manner than if innocent Adam had continued in his primitive state. But it may be asked, Why did God make choice of this for the trial of man? I answer, God did so most reasonably. For,

(1.) This being a thing in itself indifferent, was most meet for the trial of his obedience. For hereby his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, which would have been the plainest evidence of obedience. Had it been to love God or his neighbour, nature itself taught him to do so, and by the natural make of his soul he was inclined to this. What trial would that have been to a man newly

created, and loaded with benefits from God, not to take another God, worship images, or take his name in vain, when he saw all to be God's creatures or servants; to keep the sabbath, which was to return once a-week only? He had no father or mother to honour, none to kill but her that was his own flesh, none to commit adultery with, none to steal from, none to bear false witness against, none to covet their goods. Thus the prohibition of a thing in itself indifferent was a proper test, and the only proper test for the trial of man.

(2.) Thus man's obedience or disobedience would be most clear and conspicuous, being in an external thing whereof his very senses might be judge; which could not be in the internal acts of obedience.

(3.) This was most proper for asserting the sovereign dominion of God, who had set him down in a beautiful paradise, and made him lord of the world. Was it not very reasonable that God should keep one single tree from him, as a testimony of his holding of God as his great Landlord?

(4.) This was most useful and necessary to man, as a memorandum of the state wherein he was created. For man was created with a free-will to good, whereof the tree of life was an evidence; but also to evil, whereof the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an evidence. So that in effect it was a continual watchword to him, and a beacon set up before him to beware of dashing on the rock of sin.

(5.) It was a great mercy to man, in that, beside the natural make of his soul, which was turned towards God as his chief happiness and end, he had this prohibition set to keep it in that posture. For as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hand, *Exod. xvii. 12.* so man had the fabric of his body looking upward, and this fair tree forbidden him, to teach him that his happiness lay not in the creatures, but in God. So that this tree being forbidden was a sign of emptiness hung before the creatures door, with that inscription, *Here is not your rest*; the creatures hand pointing man away from themselves to God, as the alone fountain of happiness.

(6.) *Lastly*, This was a compend of the whole law of God, wherein all was summarily comprehended, viz. love to God, and his neighbour, as will afterwards be made appear.

III. I come now to consider the evil of this first sin. Some

may be ready to say, Was not the eating of the forbidden fruit a little sin? So it appears indeed in the sight of blind man, whose eye being put out with it, sees not the great majesty of God, and the horrid evil of the action. But indeed it was most horrible, if ye consider,

1. The aggravations of it.
2. The nature of it.
3. The effects of it.

First, Let us view the aggravations of this first sin. Consider,

1. The person who did it. I may say it was not a sinner that sinned, but an innocent person, free from all inclination to evil; one whom God made able to stand if he would, and endued with the image of God, without any mixture of sinful ignorance, perverseness of will, or irregularity of affections. No wonder to see a man with a poor stock soon broken; but that a man who had such a large stock should play the bankrupt, was horrid indeed.

2. What was the thing for which he broke the command. Achan had a wedge of gold to tempt him, and Judas thirty pieces of silver to entice his covetous disposition. But what was the enticing object in Adam's case? The fruit of a tree: A small thing indeed: but the smaller the thing was, the more inexcusable the sinner, whom Satan could draw after him by so slender a thread. What need had he of that, when God had given him abundance of other fruit? But, with David, Adam spares his own flock, and takes his neighbour's one lamb.

3. The persons wronged by this sin. He sinned against God himself, to whom he owed the strictest obedience; against his soul and body, upon which he brought wrath and a curse; against all his posterity, who were then in his loins, upon whom his sin has entailed a scene of evils, under which the human race will groan to the end of time. Never did one sin strike against so many at once,

4. The time of this transgression. Man was scarcely well come out of the hand of his Creator, till he lifted up his heel against him. He stood very short while, till he turned giddy with ambition, and fell into disgrace. It is probably thought he fell the same day he was created; and such an early revolt from his allegiance was a very high aggravation of his sin.

“3. The place where the crime was committed. In paradise, where every plant and flower were proclaiming the glory of God, and where he wanted nothing that was necessary for him. In the presence-chamber, as it were, he struck at his Sovereign Lord and King. So his offence was aggravated like the murder of Zacharias, whom the Jews slew between the temple and the altar, Matt. xxiii. 35.

Secondly, The nature of this sin. It was not one single sin, but a complication of all evils, a violation of the whole law of God, and a total apostasy from him in heart, lip, and life *. This was a sin whereby at one touch both the natural and positive law was trampled under foot; yea, by which all the ten commandments were struck at, at once.

1. Did they not chuse new gods; when, by eating of this fruit, they made their belly their god; self their god; nay the devil their god, when they conspired with him against God, being filled with pride and ambition as he to be like God; when they believed the devil and mistrusted God, and shook off the yoke of his dominion, turning rebels to him, and being most unthankful for the divine goodness expressed towards them? Rebel-man set up a trinity, (1.) Of his belly, by sensuality, (2.) Of himself, by ambition; and, (3.) Of the devil, by believing him, and disbelieving his Creator.

2. Though man at first received, yet he did not observe that great ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. He contemned that ordinance which God had most plainly appointed, and would needs carve out to himself how he would serve the Lord.

He took the name of the Lord his God in vain, despising his attributes, whereby he makes himself known, his justice, truth, power, &c. profaning God's ordinance, that sacramental tree; abusing his word, by not giving credit to it; and abusing his works, that creature which he should not have touched; and violently misconstruing the work of providence, as if God, by that act of forbidding them that tree, had minded to keep them from happiness. And therefore though there was no man to punish them, God suffered them not to escape his righteous judgment.

* A more particular view of the ingredients in the first sin may be seen in the author's *View of the Covenant of Works*, p. 80, 81. published in 1772.

4. He was so far from remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy, that he put himself out of all case for serving God ere it came, by this means. He kept not that state of rest wherein God had placed him.

5. Adam honoured not his Father in heaven. Both our first parents minded not their relative duties. Eve forgot herself, and acts without advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; and Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation too, and so confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. Therefore their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them.

6. He was the greatest murderer that ever lived. By this act he was a child-murderer, cutting the throats of all his posterity; and he was a self-murderer too.

7. Our first parents were fain to cover their nakedness with fig-leaves, which their luxury and sensuality had brought them to.

8. Adam committed theft; and was but a thief and a robber in taking that which was not his own, against the will of the great Owner. He was the Achan in the camp.

9. He bare false witness against the Lord, when he ate of the forbidden fruit. It was an avouching, that God's word was not to be believed, that the Lord dealt hardly and scryptly with him, and grudged his happiness.

10. He was discontented with that happy state wherein God had placed him. He was not content with his lot, and therefore, like another king of Babylon, he coveted an evil covetousness to his house; which ruined both himself and them.

Thirdly, Consider the effects of this first sin.

1. God was robbed of his glory, that he should have had from the creature's active obedience. He was made and well qualified for glorifying his Creator; but breaking covenant with God, and falling under the curse of the law, he was quite indisposed for that work. He could aim no more at this mark which God set before him.

2. God's image was defaced; the King of Heaven's picture was rent in pieces. What a huge offence would it be to come into a workman's shop, and with one touch dash in pieces a curious piece of work that he had made? Yet thus offensively did Adam behave, spurning at the image of God, and quite defacing it from his soul.

3. Adam and all his posterity were ruined by this fatal transgression. It opened the sluice to all that flood of miseries that has overspread the face of the earth. At this gate sin and death entered into the world, where they will reign till time shall be no more. God is just and holy; and if the first sin had not deserved this punishment, it would not have been inflicted with such a mark of indignation.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. Say not when ye are tempted, it is but a little sin, and therefore ye may act it. Consider, that which in the commission is but as the little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, when God comes to judgment, or conscience gets up, will cover the face of the heavens. Little do ye know what a small temptation may be big with. A man may drown in a little rivulet as well as in the deep sea.

2. Then God's will is a sufficient bar to hold us back from any thing, if we would be safe. And therefore let us know, that where there is no more to be a hedge to us but the bare command of God, if we leap over it, a serpent will bite us. Ah! how few know what it is to be restrained by a bare command of God! Ah! the generality leap over the hedge of God's will and law, and live as if there were no restraint upon them from the God of heaven, who will severely punish all transgressions of his law.

3. Beware of the pleasure of your senses, and the pride of life. The lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh ruined the world at first, and do so still. The devil shoots his darts by the eye into the soul, which is weaker now than it was in the primitive state, and more liable to deception. Therefore watch your eyes and ears. Have a care of sensuality. Eating ruined Adam and Eve; and still ruins many, who eat not for God or his glory, but to satisfy their sensual appetite, as they did.

4. *Lastly*, O prize Christ, who to redeem lost man, did hang upon a tree, and drink the cup of wrath as the bitter fruits of sin, and was buried in a garden. The first Adam ate of the forbidden tree, and Christ hung on the cursed tree. Adam's preposterous love to his wife made him sin, and Christ's love to his spouse made him suffer. Our first parents pleased their sensual appetite with the taste of the pleasant fruit of the forbidden tree, and therefore Christ got vinegar mixed with gall to drink upon the cross-tree.

Adam sinned in a garden, and in a garden was Christ buried. By eating the forbidden fruit, death came upon all men to condemnation; and by eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, life is brought to the soul. O then, sinners, flee unto the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away; and ye shall be reinstated in all that happiness and favour with God which he forfeited by eating the forbidden fruit.



OF OUR FALL IN ADAM.

ROMANS V. 19.—*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

THIS text consists of two propositions. The first is, *By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.* Where consider,

1. Who that one man was. It was Adam. This is plain from ver. 14. and to no other can it agree.

2. What that disobedience of his was. It was his first sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit. This was that sin that first broke into the world, and opened the door to death, ver. 12. This was the transgression of Adam, ver. 14. *that offence* or fall, ver. 18. *the offence of one*, or, as the Greek will bear, *the one offence* 'tou henos paraptomati,' here called *disobedience*, for thereby he hearkened to the devil, not to God.

3. Whom it concerned; *many*. This is in effect the same with the *all* mentioned ver. 14. But the alteration of the phrase is not without reason: for there is an exception here of the man Christ, of whom he speaks in the next clause. It reached many men, but not all simply; he, and he only, was excepted.

4. How it touched them; they were *made sinners* by it. Now, there are only two ways how men might be made sinners by the disobedience of Adam, viz. either by imputation or imitation. The last is not meant. (1.) Because some of those many who are made sinners, are not capable of imitation or actual sin, viz. infants. (2.) Because we are

made righteous, not by the imitation, but imputation, of Christ's righteousness; but as we are made righteous by the one, so we are made sinners by the other.

5. The foundation of this imputation, which is a relation betwixt the *one* and the *many* here implied; for unless there had been some bond of union betwixt the one and many, the sin of that one could not have been imputed to the many. There was indeed a natural bond betwixt him and us: but this was not the ground of the imputation; for we have such an union with our immediate parents, whose sin is not thus imputed. It behoved them to be a moral bond, by the way of a covenant, he being the representative of many in the covenant of works. From these words there arises this doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.'

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What sin of Adam's it was that they who sinned and fell with him, sinned and fell in.

II. Who they were that sinned and fell in Adam.

III. How the first sin of Adam comes to be imputed to us.

IV. Conclude with some inferences.

I I am to shew what sin of Adam's it was that they who sinned and fell with him, sinned and fell in. It was his first sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit. That sin is also their sin. This was the sin that broke the covenant of works. Other sins of Adam are not imputed to them, more than those of any other private persons. For he was a head only of obedience, not of suffering. So then, Adam quickly betaking himself to the covenant of grace, and placing himself under another head as a private man, ceased to be the head in the covenant of works. Adam had all his children in one ship to carry them to Immanuel's land; by his negligence he dashed the ship on a rock, and broke it all in pieces; and so he and his lay foundering in a sea of guilt: Jesus Christ lets out the second covenant as a rope to draw them to the shore. Adam for himself lays hold on it, while others hold by the broken boards of the ship, till they be by the power of grace enabled to quit them too, as he was.

II. I proceed to shew who they were that sinned and fell in Adam. They were all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation. So,

1. Christ is excepted. Adam's sin was not imputed to the man Christ. This is plain from Heb. vii. 26. He was *separated from sinners*, and was not infected with the plague whereof he was to be the cleanser. And so Christ comes not in under Adam as head, but is opposed to Adam as another head in the text.

Christ was indeed a Son of Adam, as appears from his genealogy brought up to Adam, Luke iii. And it was necessary he should be so, that he might be our near kinsman, and that the same nature that sinned might suffer. But he came not of him by ordinary generation: the extraordinariness of his descent lay in that he was born of a virgin. And upon this account he came not in under Adam in the covenant of works; for Christ was not born by virtue of that blessing of marriage given before the fall, Gen. i. 28. but by virtue of a covenant-promise made after the fall, Gen. iii. 15. So that Adam could represent none in that covenant, but such as were to spring from him by virtue of that blessing.

2. All mankind besides sinned and fell with Adam in that first transgression. His sin of eating the forbidden fruit is imputed to them; *i. e.* is reckoned theirs, as if they had committed it. Consider,

(1.) The scripture plainly testifies, that all sinned in him, Rom. v. 12. 'By one man's sin, death entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Hence it is plain, that death has not come into the world but in pursuit of sin; all die, for all have sinned. Infants are not exempted more than others. We see graves of an infant's length; yea, sometimes the womb is made their grave, and they get a coffin instead of a cradle. It is long ere infants laugh, but they come into the world crying; a sure evidence of misery. What have they done? What could they do? Yet God is just, and is not pursuing innocents. What then can be the quarrel but this, that they are taken prisoners for the debt contracted by their father? ver. 14.

(2.) All fell with him into misery by that sin. Now, a just God will not involve the innocent with the guilty in the same punishment. Consider,

[1.] All fell under the guilt of eternal wrath for that sin, Rom. v. 16, 18. 'The judgment was by one to condemnation.—By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.' Now, where there is a communion of guilt there must needs be a communion of sin; for the law can bind none over to punishment but for sin. 'All die in Adam,' says the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 22. but it is only the soul that sins that shall die, Ezek. xviii. 4. therefore all sinned in Adam.

[2.] All fell under the loss of God's image, and the corruption of nature with him. How comes it that all men must say with David, Psal. li. 5. 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me?' Take away the imputation of Adam's sin, and there is no foundation for the corruption of nature. It must be some sin that God punishes with the deprivation of original righteousness, which can be no other than the first sin of Adam.

[3.] All the punishments inflicted on Adam and Eve, for that sin, as specified in Gen. iii. are common to mankind, their posterity; and therefore the sin must be so too.

III. I come now to shew how the first sin of Adam comes to be imputed to us. The great reason of this is, because we are all included in Adam's covenant. The covenant was made with him, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. Consider here,

1. It was the covenant of works that was made with Adam, the condition whereof was perfect obedience. This was the first covenant. As for the covenant of grace, it was made with the second Adam.

2. It was made with him for himself. That was the way he himself was to attain perfect happiness; his own stock was in that ship.

3. It was made not only for himself, but for all his posterity descending from him by ordinary generation. So that he was not here as a mere private person, but as a public person, the moral head and representative of all mankind. Hence the scripture holds forth Adam and Christ, as if there never had been any but these two men in the world, 1 Cor. xv. 47. 'The first man is of the earth, earthy, (says he); the second man is the Lord from heaven.' And this he does, because they were two public persons, each of them having under them persons represented by them,

Rom. v. 14, 18. 'Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.' This is plain from the imputation of Adam's sin, which necessarily requires this as the foundation of it. We being thus included and represented in that covenant, what he did he did as our head, and therefore it is justly imputed to us.

But some may be ready to say, we made not choice of Adam for that purpose. *Ans.* (1.) God made the choice, who was as meet to make it for us as we for ourselves. And 'who art thou that repliest against God.' (2.) Adam was our natural head, the common father of us all, Acts xvii. 26. and who was so meet to be trusted with the concerns of all mankind as he? But to clear further the reasonableness of this imputation, and to still the murmurings of proud nature against the dispensation of God, consider,

1. Adam's sin is imputed to us, because it is ours. For God doth not reckon a thing ours, which is not so, Rom. ii. 2.—'The judgment of God is according to truth.' For God's justice doth not punish men for a sin which is no way theirs. And it is our sin upon the account aforesaid. Even as Christ's righteousness is ours by virtue of our union with him. As if a person that has the plague infect others, and they die, they die, by their own plague, and not by that of another.

2. It was free for God, antecedently to the covenant made with man, either to have annihilated all mankind, or if he had preserved them, to have given them no promise of eternal life in heaven, notwithstanding by natural justice they would have been liable to his wrath in case of sin. Was it not then an act of grace in God to make such a rich covenant as this? and would not men have consented to this representation gladly in this case?

3. Adam had a power to stand if he would, being made after the image of God, Gen. i. 26. He was set down with a stock capable to be improved to the eternal upmaking of all his posterity. So that he was as capable to stand as any afterwards could be for themselves: and this was a trial that

would have soon been over, while the other would have been continually a-doing, had men been created independent on him as their representative.

4. He had natural affection the strongest to engage him. He was our father, and all we the children that were in his loins, to whom we had as good ground to trust as to any other creature.

5. His own stock was in the ship; his all lay at stake as well as ours. Forgetting our interest, he behoved to disregard his own, for he had no separate interest from ours.

6. If he had stood, we could never have fallen; he had gained for us eternal happiness; the image of God, and the crown of glory, would have descended from him to us by a sure conveyance.

And is it not reasonable, on the other hand, that if he fell, we should fall, and bear the loss? No man quarrels, that when a master sets his land in tack to a man and his heirs upon conditions, if the first possessor break the bargain, the heirs be denuded of it.

7. *Lastly*, All that quarrel this dispensation must renounce their part in Christ: for we are made righteous by him, as sinners are made guilty by Adam. If we fall in with the one, why not with the other? We chose Christ for our head in the second covenant, no more than we did Adam in the first covenant.

A few inferences shall conclude this subject.

1. Hence see the dreadful nature of sin; one sin could destroy a whole world. What a plague of plagues must this sin be, that has swept away not families, towns, and countries only, but the whole race of mankind! View it in this glass, if you would know it aright.

2. Let this be a lesson to parents. Adam's fall should be a watch-word to every parent, to endeavour by all means to do nothing that may bring ruin on their children. Many times children are destroyed by their parents, through their bad example, and their omission of exercising proper discipline and correction on them. Ye that are parents, give your children a good and pious example, accompanied with wholesome precepts and instructions. And watch over and narrowly observe their behaviour, and pray for and with them, that they may be delivered from wrath and condemnation.

3. This doctrine affords a lesson of humility to all. The rich have no cause to boast of their wealth and abundance; for they have a sad heritage left to them; and the poor and needy have the very same. If one man be better than another, no thanks to us; for we are all alike by nature.

4. Hence view and wonder at the redemption purchased for poor fallen sinners by the obedience and death of Christ. Behold here the necessity of it: What could they do for their help that came into the world under a sentence of condemnation?—the seasonableness of this deliverance, when the sentence was passed on all:—the perfection of it; it takes away this first sin, and all others too. How strong must the power of the grace of Christ be, that could stop the torrent of Adam's sin, when increased with innumerable actual transgressions? Rom. v. 16.

5. *Lastly*, Quit your hold of the first Adam and his covenant, and come to and unite with Christ by faith, and lay hold on his covenant, 1 Cor. xv. 22. Flee to and make use of his blood for the taking away of the first sin in particular, and mourn for it before the Lord. If this be not removed, it will ruin you. And to stir you up to a concern about this sin, consider how we are naturally writing after this copy, by our unbelief of the word, our affecting mainly what is forbidden, &c. as I shewed before. The offer of Christ as a Saviour from sin is made to you; and ye are called to embrace him as a Saviour to you in particular. Accept the offer, as ye regard the salvation of your souls; otherwise you will be ruined, not only by the breach of the first covenant, but by despising of the second, which is the only means devised by infinite wisdom for the recovery of fallen sinners.

OF THE SINFULNESS OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE.

PSAL. li. 5.—*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

MAN that was holy and happy is now fallen; and his fall should never be forgotten, but lamented, though it were with tears of blood. Man's first sin was the spring of all our woes, the poisonous fountain from whence all our mi-

very flowed. It brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery; a state wherein man can do nothing but sin, wherein every thought, every word, and every action, is tainted with sin, wherein enmity to God and his holy nature, and rebellion against and opposition to his righteous law universally reign and prevail. In this dismal state to which mankind are reduced by the fall, no true holiness is attainable; for it is a state of sin; and no salvation from wrath can be had, for it is a state of misery. The state we must be brought into, out of our sinful and miserable state under the breach of the covenant of works, if we would attain unto salvation, is the state of grace under the new covenant. Those that are delivered from their natural state, under the broken covenant, are persons effectually called by grace, and are 'in Christ Jesus,' Rom. viii. 1. Those that are still under the bondage of the old covenant, are out of Christ, and 'have no hope,' Eph. ii. 12. This state is a very sinful and miserable state. For the power that the covenant of works has over them, is a commanding, cursing, and condemning power: it commands them to yield perfect obedience, under pain of the curse, but affords no strength for performing it; and it curses and condemns them for every the least failure. The source of all is the total corruption and depravity of human nature, which we derive from our first father, in whom we all sinned, and with whom we fell, in his first transgression. In the text we have,

1. A plain confession of the being of original sin. Here is *sin* and *iniquity*, which the Psalmist owns he had while yet in the womb, *sin* in which he was *shapen*, and *iniquity* in which he was *conceived*. This was not peculiar to the Psalmist, but is common to all mankind sprung in an ordinary way from the first transgressor Adam.

2. The way of the conveyance of this original sin, viz. by natural generation. In this way every son and daughter of Adam are infected with this leprosy.

3. The malignant efficacy it hath on men's lives; *Behold* says David, *I was shapen in iniquity*, &c. He points out original sin as the fountain of all his actual transgressions. For how can a corrupt fountain send out wholesome streams?

The doctrine observable from the the text is,

DOCT. 'The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original

righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.'

In discoursing from this doctrine I will shew,

I. That there is such a thing as original sin.

II. Wherein original sin consists.

III. Deduce some inferences for application.

I. Our first business is to shew, that there is such a thing as original sin. Of this we have melancholy proofs.

1. Consider scripture-testimonies. In the text we have David, a man after God's own heart, yet confessing he *was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin*. Adam begets Seth, from whom the whole race of mankind derive their origin, after 'his own image,' Gen. v. 1. opposed to 'the image of God,' after which he was made, Gen. i. 26. consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Job says, chap. xiv. 4. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' This is God's verdict on all mankind, Gen. vi. 5. 'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.'

2. This is plain from the case of infants, which we all once were. We may plainly read in their faces, that we are covered over with sin and guilt before any other covering come on us. For, (1.) What else mean scripture-ordinances about them? If there were not in them a superfluity of naughtiness, why were they circumcised? if they are not unclean, why are they baptised? This corruption of human nature was also shadowed forth by the law, concerning purifying of women. (2.) Consider the sad effects of sin upon them, which meet them as soon as they come into the world, yea in the womb, such as sickness, pains, death, &c.; which says, that 'by nature we are the children of wrath,' Eph. ii. 3. (3.) Consider the early appearances of Adam's image in them, before ever they come to the use of reason. What a deal of pride, ambition, curiosity, vanity, wilfulness, and averseness to good, appears in them; and when they creep out of infancy, what obstinacy and incorrigibleness appears in them; so that there is a necessity of using the rod of correction to drive away the foolishness that is bound in their heart, Prov. xxii. 15.

3. The universal necessity of regeneration plainly proves the corruption of our nature, John. iii. 3. 'Except a man

be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Were we not disjointed by nature; what need would there be for us to be taken down, and put up again? If the first birth were right, what need would there be for a second?

II. I come now to shew wherein original sin consists. It consists in these three things: the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of the whole nature.

First, Original sin consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin. Guilt is an obligation to punishment. For this sin, which is ours by imputation, we are liable to punishment. This guilt lies on all men by nature, Rom. v. 18. And this guilt of Adam's first sin is original sin imputed; of which I spoke in the former discourse. The only remedy for it is in Jesus Christ; 1 Cor. xv. 22. Eph. i. 7. Rom. iii. 24.

Secondly, It consists in the want of original righteousness. Original righteousness is that righteousness and entire rectitude of all the faculties of the soul wherein man was created. Man's soul was so adorned with it, that it resembled its great Maker. But now man is stript of these ornaments, he is left quite naked.

1. There is a want of that knowledge in the mind wherein man was created. That light that was set up in the soul of man is now gone; though the candlestick is not removed, the candle is, Job. xi. 12. 'For vain man would be wise; though man be born like a wild ass's colt.' The mind is like the ostrich; whom God hath deprived of understanding. 'The understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in men, because of the blindness of their heart, Eph. iv. 18. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can ye know them, because they are spiritually discerned,' 1 Cor. ii. 14:

2. That righteousness which was in the will of man, that belief and inclination to good, is now removed, Eccl. vii. 29. 'I know [says the apostle] that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not,' Rom. vii. 18.

3. The holiness of the affections is gone. Spiritual affections have taken the wing, and left the soul as a bird without wings which hath nothing whereby it can mount, Rom. vii. 18. forecited.

This want of original righteousness is a sin, being a want of conformity to the law of God, which requires all moral perfection. It is also a punishment of sin, and so is justly inflicted by God. And though the want of this righteousness be sin, yet God's depriving man of it, or rather not giving it him, is a most just act; seeing Adam, having got it for himself and his posterity, threw it away, and God is not obliged to restore it. And it can be no other sin but the first sin, whereof this with-holding of original righteousness is the punishment. So true it is, that if the imputation of Adam's first sin be denied, original sin is quite rased, there is no foundation left for it.

Thirdly, It consists in the corruption of the whole nature. Concerning which two things are to be considered.

1. That the nature of man is indeed corrupted, We ~~must~~ not think that original sin lies only in the want of original righteousness. No, man is not only void of good qualities naturally, but he is filled with evil ones.

(1.) The scripture holds it forth so, while it calls this ~~the~~ 'the flesh which lusteth against the Spirit, the old man, the body of death, the law of the members warring against the law of the mind,' &c.

(2.) The soul of man cannot be otherwise. It must ~~not~~ be morally right or wrong; either it is habitually conformable to the law of God, or not; if it be not, its inclinations are against it. The soul has either God's image or that of the devil upon it. If there is not light in the mind, there must be darkness there.

2. Consider the nature and extent of this corruption. As to its extent,

1st. All men are corrupted. There is no exception of any one of Adam's posterity descending from him by ordinary generation: Gen. vi. 5. 'God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' Job xiv. 4. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' The virgin Mary, of the substance of whose body the holy human nature of Christ was formed by the operation of the Holy Spirit, is included among the rest. Even the children of holy parents are corrupted; for generation is by nature, not by grace. The circumcised father begetteth an uncircumcised child, as the purest corn that is sown produceth chaff.

244. All of every man is corrupted; it is a leprosy that has overspread universally; a leaven that hath leavened the whole lump. It has overspread,

1. The soul in all its faculties, Tit. i. 15, 'Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.'

2. If we look to the understanding, there we will see, (1.) Darkness over all that region. It is the land of darkness and shadow of death, where the very light is darkness; darkness in the abstract, Eph. v. 8. We are born blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle. There is a dreadful stupidity in spiritual things; the natural man cannot take them up, 1 Cor. ii. 14.; but he is a fool, and a madman, because in these things he is a mere natural.

(2.) A bitter root of unbelief naturally grows there, which spreads the whole life. Men by nature are 'children of disobedience,' Eph. ii. 2. Or, 'of impersuasibleness.' How like Adam do we look! how universally is that article embraced, 'Ye shall not surely die!' and how does it spread itself through the lives of men, as if they were resolved to follow after the same example of unbelief!

3. As for the will, call it no more will, but lust. It is bent to evil, but not to good. 'God made man upright,' his will straight with his own, with a power in the will to do good and an inclination and bent thereto. But now behold in it,

(1.) A pitiful weakness. Man naturally cannot will what is good and acceptable to God. He cannot produce one holy act until grace change the heart, more than a stone can feel, or a beast reason. Hence the apostle says, Phil. ii. 13. 'It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Rom. v. 6. 'We are without strength.' 1 Cor. iii. 5. 'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.' Men by nature are dead spiritually 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. ii. 1. If they will what is good, it is in a carnal manner.

(2.) An aversion to good. We are backward to it, and therefore must be drawn as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Sin is the natural man's element; and as the fish isaverse to come out of the water, so is the sinner from the saddle of sin, in which he delights to lie. Hence says our Lord, John v. 40. 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye

might have life.' They were not only naturally unable to come, but they had no inclination to the duty. Their stomachs are full, and, like the full soul that loaths the honey-comb, they nauseate the heavenly food in their offer.

(3.) There is a proneness to evil, a bent and inclination to it, Hos. xi. 7. 'My people are bent to backsliding from me.' Hence natural man are mad on idols. Set sin and duty, death and life, cursing and blessing before the natural man, and leave the will to itself, it will naturally run to sin, to death, and the curse, as the waters run down a steep place.

(4.) There is a crossness and contrariety in the will to God and goodness, Rom. viii. 7. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' That God forbids a thing is a motive to the will to like it. No fruit is so sweet to the corrupt appetite as the forbidden fruit. Strip sin naked of all its ornaments and allurements, and the natural man will court it for itself. The will naturally lies cross to God.

(1.) It is cross to his nature. He is holiness itself; and the will rejects holiness for itself. Hence men 'say to God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job xxi. 14. The will is an enemy to the scripture God, and hence they do what they can for the change, Psal. i. 21. It was most agreeable to nature, that the pagans made their gods prophane. The proud man desires to have none above him to controul him, or call him to account, and the natural man wants to have no God, Ps. xiv. 1.

(2.) It is cross to his will. (1.) To his law, which binds to conformity to God, which the natural man hates, Rom. viii. 7. Corrupt nature rises against this yoke: they would have the law brought down to their corruptions. Hence that is a distinguishing mark of the godly man, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law doth he meditate day and night,' Psal. i. 2. (2.) To his gospel. The will of man naturally is quite opposite to the grand device of salvation through the Lord Jesus; and natural men, like Judas, would rather hang themselves than go to Christ, submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3. They say, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' Luke xix. 14. The gospel is designed for humbling the pride and selfishness of men; but they are for exalting self, and placing it on the throne. It lies cross to the will of God in its chief acts.

(1.) As to the intention, the will is wholly cross and perverse as to the ultimate end. Self is set up for the chief end instead of God, 2 Tim. iii. 2. 'Men shall be lovers of their own selves.' In this we follow our first fathers footsteps. The will is like a traitor, who, instead of gathering in the spoils of the crown to the king, gathers them in to itself.

(2.) As to the choice, Psal. iv. 6. 'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?' God offers himself to be the sinner's portion; but he chuses the creatures for his portion, and sin for the way to obtain it.

(5.) There is contumacy in it. The will is wilful in evil and will not be turned, though it should run on the sword-point of vengeance, Ezek. xviii. 31. 'Why will ye die, O house of Israel?' Like the leviathan in his way, it 'laugheth at the shaking of a spear,' Job xli. 29. 'I shall have peace (says the natural man), though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst,' Deut. xxix. 19. This is the stony heart, which as a stone is insensible, resisting, inflexible, but by the power of divine grace, hard to receive impressions, but as the water to let them go.

Edly, As to the affections, they are quite disordered. While man stood, his reason was subject to the law, and his affections to his reason: but now, like the unruly horse, they will either not receive, or else run away with the rider, Jer. ii. 23, 24.

(1.) The affections are misplaced as to their objects. The natural man is a spiritual monster. His heart is there, where his feet should be, fixed on the earth; his heels are lifted up against Heaven, which his heart should be set on. He loves what he should hate, and hates what he should love; joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in; glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor; acting in direct opposition to the apostolical injunction of 'seeking those things which are above,' Col. i. 1.

(2.) When the natural man's affections are fixed on lawful objects, they can keep no bounds. They cannot flow to the creature, without overflowing; they cannot love a lawful object, without overloving it; nor joy in any created comfort, without excess. The affections are never right, only evil. Further, this corruption has spread even to the body.

That which should be a temple for God is become a prison of lusts.

1. It incites the soul to sin. What a snare is the temperature of the body to the soul, leading it to the commission of many foul sins! Therefore the godly beat it down, as an unruly beast, keep it under, and bring it into subjection, so it cast not the soul into sin and misery, 1 Cor. ix. 27. It is the house wherein snares are spread for the soul; so many, to please their bodies, make shipwreck of their souls.

2. Its members are instruments of unrighteousness, Rom. vi. 13. Are not the eyes and ears the windows where death comes in to the soul? The tongue is an unclean beast, by which the impure heart vents its filthiness. The throat is an open sepulchre; the feet run the devil's errand, and the belly is made a god. The body is naturally an armour for Satan, and a magazine of armour against the Lord.

What shall we say? who can express the corruption of nature? The whole man is corrupted. All defilement is in the flesh, naturally, Rom. i. 29. The treasure of wickedness is in the heart, Matth. xii. 35. It is a cage full of unclean beasts. The tongue is a world of iniquity, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. What an universe of wickedness and uncleanness must the heart then be?

This is a rude draught of the corruption of human nature in its fallen state, which the Spirit of God in scripture calls *flesh*, in many passages that might be quoted. The propriety of this expression will be evident from the following particulars.

1. It denotes the degrading and debasing malignity that is in sin, which unspirits and unsouls a man, if I may be allowed such expressions. A sinner is called a carnal man, a man made up of nothing but a lump of dull flesh knoed together, without spirit. And therefore the apostle, Rom. viii. 13. does not bid men mortify the deeds of their souls, but of their bodies, because wicked men act as if they had no souls, or at least not so noble a soul as the rational creature.

2. It denotes what it is that sin tends unto. It is only to please and gratify the flesh; to pamper the body, that sensual, sordid, and baser part of man. The soul of the natural man acts for no higher end than the soul of a beast. The soul of a beast acts not for itself, but is made a drudge and underling to the body. It serves only to carry the body

and down to its pasture, and make it to relish its food and fodder. And thus it is with the souls of wicked men; they do not for themselves, but are only provisors for the body, that seek out and lay in provision for the flesh. Hence we have that exhortation, Rom. xiii. 14. 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.'

2. Though the soul be the chief seat of the flesh, yet the body is the great instrument by which it acts, Rom. vi. 19. Hence its actions are called 'the deeds of the body,' Rom. vi. 18. Though some sins are seated in the mind, as here-ty, covetousness, malice, pride, &c. yet they are set down among the works of the flesh in the apostle's catalogue, Gal. v. 19, 20. And as to the sins of omission, they usually take their rise in men from some inordinate sensual affection to the creature, which causes them to omit their duty to God; and generally speaking, most sins are acted by the flesh. When the devil would set up a kingdom in the hearts of men, he doth it by the flesh; for what is nearer and dearer to him than our flesh? and things pleasant and grateful to the flesh strongly promote his designs. These darken and corrupt their minds, corrupt their hearts, and entice and allure to sinful affections; so that they hunt after them with an eager pursuit, to the woful neglect of God and their present souls.

3. The disorder of the sensitive appetite, which inclines men to the interest and conveniences of the flesh, is the great cause of all sin; and therefore fallen man is represented in scripture as wholly governed by his sensual inclinations, Gen. vi. 3. John iii. 6. as if he had nothing in him but what is earthly and carnal. Our souls cleave so fast to the earth in our degenerate state, and are so much addicted to the body, that they have lost their primitive excellence and beauty. Our understanding, will, and affections, are wholly distempered by our senses, and enslaved to the flesh. That with great propriety corrupt nature is called *flesh* in scripture.

4. This corruption is most truly and properly sin, even in the degenerate, where the guilt of it is removed by the blood of Christ, and the power of it subdued by his Spirit and gifts. And all the motions thereof in them are sin; as appears from what the apostle says, Rom. vii. 5, 7, 8. 'For

when we are in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth that unto death. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid: Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.' Gal. v. 17. 'For the flesh lieth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.'

2. This corruption is exceeding sinful. For the law of covenant of works made with Adam, as the head and representative of all his posterity, required perfect obedience and conformity to God both in heart and life, to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. God placed him in a holy and happy state; endued him with his image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; and gave him sufficient power and ability to perform the duty he owed to his Lord, and to continue in the course of obedience, till he should be confirmed both in holiness and felicity: Now, man having by sin stript himself of the image of God, and rendered himself incapable of obeying God either in heart or life, the law still requires all the holiness and righteousness that it did when he was in his upright estate; and the want of conformity to the law of God must be exceeding sinful, as a breach of the law of God, and trampling on his image. And, in order to affect us with a deep sense of the sinfulness of the total corruption of our nature, let us consider,

(1.) The pregnancy of this corruption. It is indeed a sin virtually, which is retailed out in many particular sinful acts. It contains in its bowels the seed and spawn of all wickedness whatsoever. All treasons and disobediences, rebellions and hostilities, against the supreme and sovereign majesty of heaven, are to be found in it. It is the nursery, seed, and womb, yea, every sin that is possible to be committed is in this womb, so conceived and formed, animated and brought to the birth; as there needs nothing but a temptation and opportunity to bring it forth. It may be you never imbrued your hands in your brother's blood, as Cain did, nor have actually committed murder, yet the seed

and spawn of it is lurking in thy heart; and the only reason why you have kept free from it is, because God hath restrained and kept thee back, and hath not suffered the like temptations and occasions to come in thy way. It may be you never set cities on fire, dashed out childrens brains, ript up women with child, as Hazael did; yet all these sins are lurking in thy heart, though they were never acted by thine hands. Hazael was angry when the prophet told him so much, 2 Kings viii. 12. 13. but he acted all that afterwards and more, when he was advanced to his master's throne. He could not think that ever he could be guilty of such atrocious and detestable crimes, unless he were transformed into a dog. He was little acquainted with the desperate wickedness of man's nature, which habitually inclines him to the most barbarous and bloody cruelty.

2. This corruption that lies in the heart is the woful cause, source, and spring of all the actual transgressions which stain mens lives. Every wicked and sinful action derives its descent from this. From whence come murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, &c? Our Saviour tells us, Matt. xv. 19. They proceed out of the heart. If you will trace these streams to the true spring and fountain, you will find it to be the sin and wickedness of the heart. This is that seed and loathsome spawn to which all this detestable vermin owe their original. It is fruitful and productive of all manner of evils. It is that which fills people's mouths with cursing, swearing, lying, slandering, &c. makes their feet swift to shed blood, and puts the poison of asps under their tongue, Rom. iii. 14, 15. Yea, this defiles the whole man, and stains him with an universal pollution; Matth. xv. 18. As a lethargy in the head, or an indisposition in the stomach, diffuseth an universal malignity through the whole body, these being sovereign and principal parts in man; so this wickedness that dwells in the heart, poisons the whole life. Many a filthy and impure stream issues from this corrupt fountain.

(3.) Consider what a monstrous deformity it hath brought on the soul. The mind of man was the candle of the Lord. As it proceeded from God, it was a lightsome beam, shining with more lustre and splendour than a ray of the sun. But now it is dark and obscure, and is become

a stinking and noisome dunghill. It was once one of the brightest and most excellent pieces of the creation, next unto the angelical nature; but by sin it is transformed into an ugly monster. We justly reckon that birth monstrous, where the members have not their due place; when the head is where the feet should be or the legs in place of the arms, &c. Thus the noble powers and faculties of the soul are monstrously misplaced. That which should be highest is now lowest; that which should rule and keep the throat, is brought into a miserable subjection and bondage; that which should serve and obey, does now tyrannise and command. Passion over-rules reason; and the will receives laws from the fancy and appetite. In man's primitive state; the will was sovereign lord, reason was its counsellor; and appetite subject to both; but now it hath aspired and got above them, and oftentimes carries both into a servile compliance with the dictates of sense. Any spot or blemish upon the face of a beautiful child, when it comes but accidentally, grieves and afflicts the parents: how much more cause have we to bemoan the natural, universal, and monstrous deformity which has seized upon our souls?

4. Consider the devilishness of this corruption. There is nothing in all the world that hath so much of the devil in it as sin. It is his first-born, the beginning of his strength; that which he hatched and brought into the world. It is his work and employment, his great master-piece, that wherein he applauds himself and glories, John viii. 44. This is his image that he hath drawn upon man. Those black characters which are drawn on the soul, are of Satan's impression. As face answers to face, so doth man's corrupt nature answer the nature of the devil. It hath all the essential parts of the diabolical nature. There is in it a strong aversion from all that is good, and so is there in him; and a mighty propensity to all evil, so is it in the devil. It is Satan's correspondent, that maintains secret and constant intercourse with our mortal enemy. It is a domestic enemy, ready on all occasions to betray the soul into the hands of him, who is always going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. O, should it not deeply humble us before God, that we are so near a kin to hell, and have such a correspondence with the devil; that our corruption

makes us so like unto him, and daily affords him so great an advantage against us?

(6.) Consider the brutishness of this corruption. Sin hurries the soul on with a blind rage and fury to such acts and motions, as men in their right reason would highly condemn. It is on this account that men are compared to brute-beasts and irrational creatures; as to the horse and the mule, to a wild ass, an untamed heifer, &c. The brute-creatures, though they be not capable to know God, yet they will know and take some notice of their benefactor, and such as feed and keep them. But men kick against God, they wound Christ, and reject and expel the Holy Spirit in his motions and operations. They bellow out reproaches against his servants, whom he hath sent forth to feed and nourish their souls, Prov. xii. 1. The brutal creatures have a strong inclination to those things which tend to their health, and to the preservation and continuance of their life and strength: but sin makes men averse to their own happiness, and all the spiritual means which have a tendency thereunto. The beasts are afraid of that which is hurtful and destructive to their being: but sin pushes men on in the ways of death; and the paths which lead to eternal destruction. It is said, Job xi. 12. that 'man is born like a wild ass's colt.' He brings with him into the world a heart more wild, fierce, and untamed than any beast of the field.

6. Consider its vileness. There is nothing in the whole creation so detestable as sin. It is the abominable thing which the Lord hates. He cannot look upon it but with infinite abhorrence. There is nothing so base and so contemptible as sin. The scripture sets it forth under various notions, no single one being sufficient to express its vileness. It is called *flesh*, Gen. vi. 3. and Gal. v. 16, 17. This holds forth the vile degeneracy of man's soul since this corruption seized upon it. By creation it was pure and holy, heavenly and spiritual, near a-kin to the angels, yea, as like to the nature of God as a creature could be: but now it is transformed into flesh, made carnal, sensual, and devilish. It is vile both formally and effectively; filthy in itself, and hath made the whole man so. It is compared in scripture to those things which are most vile and detestable in the eyes of men, as filthy vomit, defiling mire, rotten members, putrefying sores, &c.

(7.) It excludes and debars from access to God and communion with him. There can be no friendship between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial, between an infinitely pure and holy God, and vile filthy polluted sinners. We have an important question proposed, Psal. xxiv. 3. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?' The answer is given, ver. 4. 'He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart: who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.' And we are told, Psal. v. 4, 5. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' The heart is the temple of God, the chief place of his residence in man; and he will never dwell in it, unless it be made clean. There is no access to God here or hereafter without holiness, James iv. 8. Rev. xxi. ult.

8. *Lastly*, It exposeth to terrible wrath. It was sin that brought the deluge upon the old world: and it hath brought many fearful plagues and judgments upon the new one since. And it is this that lays men open to the wrath and vengeance of God in the life that is to come. Hence they are called 'children of wrath,' Eph. ii. 3. They are born to wrath by nature. This is their portion and inheritance. 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven (says the apostle) against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' The curses and threatenings of the law proclaim the divine displeasure, and give warnings and intimations to sinners of what they are to expect. There is a day of wrath coming, and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. We are exposed to wrath on account of sin, in our conception, birth, life, and death, and through all eternity.

In the above three things, the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of the whole nature, consists in original sin. These three things make up this monstrous body. There lies our sinfulness which we are brought into by the fall.

How this corruption is conveyed to all the children of men, the scripture, even the text, makes it plain, that it is conveyed by natural generation, so as all that proceed from Adam

in the way of natural generation are infected with it. But if it be asked, how this original corruption is propagated from parents to children? how it comes to pass that our souls are defiled and tainted with original sin? Indeed the question is very hard and difficult. It may be this is one of those mysteries which are reserved for the world to come, about which we cannot in our present state solve every difficulty that may be moved. It is much more our duty and interest to be solicitous how to get sin out of our souls, than to pry and search into the way how it came into them. However, this is certain, that God doth not infuse it. Souls receive neither purity nor impurity from him, but only their naked essence, and the natural powers and properties flowing therefrom. He doth not infuse any impurity into men; for he cannot be the author of sin, who is the revenger of it. Nor doth he create mens souls in their original purity and rectitude; for the sin of Adam lost that, and God's justice withholds it from his posterity. As a pure and holy God, he cannot infuse any impurity into the souls of men; and as a just and righteous God, he may and doth withhold from, or create them void and destitute of, that holiness and righteousness which was once their happiness and glory. Again, it is probably thought by some, that original sin comes neither in by the soul alone, nor by the body alone, apart from the soul, but upon the union and conjunction of both in one person. It is the union of these two that constitutes a child of Adam, and as such only we are capable of being infected with his sin.

Solid divines, without a daring intrusion into unrevealed secrets, proceed by the following steps in answering this question,

1. If it be demanded, How it comes to pass that an infant becomes guilty of Adam's sin? the answer is, Because he is a child of Adam by natural generation.

2. But why is he deprived of that original rectitude with which Adam was created? they answer, Because Adam lost it by his sin, and therefore could not transmit to his posterity what he had lost,

3. But how comes he to be inclined to that which is evil? the answer is, Because he wants that original rectitude, which Adam had when he was created. For whosoever wants original righteousness, inclines naturally to that which is evil,

And so the propension of nature to that which is bad, seems to be by way of concomitancy with the want of original righteousness. No action can be holy which doth not flow from the image of God in the soul, as its root and principle. And therefore man being despoiled of this image of God, there is no action of any man in a state of nature but what is sinful and corrupt. But, as I said before, it much more concerns us how to get original corruption removed, than to inquire how it came in.

This corruption may well be called original sin, because we have it from our original, it being as old as ourselves; and because it is transmitted from Adam, the origin of mankind; and, which is the

Last thing, because all actual transgressions proceed from it, Matt. xv. 19. ; as I have already shewn.

I shall shut up this point with a few inferences.

1. No wonder then that we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; that we are attacked and made prisoners as soon as we come into the world. This says that the straight way in the course of justice would be, that we go from the womb to the grave, and that the cradle be turned into a coffin. For, in a spiritual sense, we are all dead born; and no wonder that natural death should seize those that are spiritually dead; and that all sorts of miseries should pursue those that are destitute of every thing that is good.

2. There is no ground for parents to be lifted up on the account of children, however numerous and fair. For though they may have fair faces, they have foul and deformed souls by nature; and natural beauty is far outbalanced by spiritual ugliness. Parents had much need to carry them by faith and prayer to the fountain of Christ's blood, to get them washed and purified from their spiritual uncleanness.

3. This doctrine lets us see the absolute necessity of Christ as a Saviour, who alone is able to save us from the guilt of sin by his blood, and from the filth and pollution of it by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, and from the dominion of it by the power of divine grace. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' John iii. 3.

4. *Lastly*, See the absolute necessity of mortification, of crucifying the flesh; for from it all actual sins proceed. A

form of godliness will not do. No; we must strike at the root, otherwise the branches will never die. The consideration of the total corruption and depravation of our nature should make us all lie low in the dust before a holy God; watchful against every motion and temptation to sin, restless till we be delivered from it, and indefatigable in the course of the Christian warfare. And it calls every one to mourning and lamenting over the ruins of our nature, and to supplicating the God of all grace, that he may cleanse our polluted souls, and wash us from our sins in the blood of Jesus.



OF THE MISERY OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE.

ROM. v. 12.—*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

THESE words teach us a lesson that all the books of philosophers could never do. They were sensible of the depravity and misery of human nature; but how it was depraved, and what was the spring of all the troubles the life of man is exposed to, they were utterly ignorant. We all see a flood of misery let into the world; but what way the sluice was opened, we can only learn from divine revelation. And in this passage we have it; viz. *By one man sin entered into the world*, and misery followed it close at the heels. This one man was Adam, the natural root; and the federal head of all mankind, ver. 14. In the words we have,

1. A flood of misery passing over the world, *Death passed upon all men*. For understanding this, ye must compare it with Gen. ii. 17. 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' This awful threatening is marked to be accomplished here. *Death* there implies loss of communion with God, which was evident in the fulfilling of the threatening, Gen. iii. 24. when God drove out the man; viz. from paradise, and placed a heavenly guard to prevent man's access to the tree of life. It also implies a being under God's wrath and curse, as the threatening imports. This is spiritual death. It further implies temporal death, a liableness to the miseries of this life, and to death itself, Gen. iii. 16.—*Thou shalt be*; and also eternal death; which appears from man's be-

ing excluded paradise and the tree of life, ver. 22. This threatened death, says the apostle, *passed upon all men*. 'It is appointed unto all men once to die.' viz. a natural death. There is no discharge in this war. All men are spiritually dead, dead to God and happiness. And they are all subject to eternal death, in the separation of both soul and body from God and the felicity of the other world.

2. How the sluice by which this misery has overflowed the world was opened. (1.) The personal cause was *one man* viz. Adam. (2.) The real cause was his sin, the sin of eating the forbidden fruit. This sin was the sin of all: *for all* (viz. on whom death passed) *have sinned*, not in their own persons, for infants on whom death has passed, have not so sinned; but have therefore sinned in Adam. And this sin of the first man is the cause of all the misery that has overtaken the human race.

The text affords the following doctrine.

Doctr. 'All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse; and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. That all mankind are made miserable.

II. That this misery came by their fall in Adam.

III. What that misery is that hath by the fall overtaken all mankind.

IV. Deduce some inferences for application.

I. That mankind, and all mankind, are made miserable, needs no laborious proof. Sad experience in all ages confirms the truth of this assertion. Troops of misery receive us as soon as we come into the world, whereof some one or other always accompany us till we be laid in the grave. Let men be clothed in rags, or wear a crown, the garment common to all is misery. Every sigh, tear, or sorrowful look, is a proof of this.

II. That this misery came upon men by the fall, is also clear from the text. Man came not out of God's hands with the tear in his eye, or sorrow in his heart, or a burden on his back. He never put on his dole-weed or mourning garment, till he had by sin made himself naked. Death never could enter the gates of the world, till sin set them wide open, Gen. iii. And then one sin let in the flood; and many

sins followed and increased it. The first pilot dashed the ship on a rock, and then all that were in it were cast into a sea of misery. Our first parents fell, and we being in them felt with them the sad and mournful effects of their fall.

III. I proceed to shew what that misery is which hath by the fall overtaken all mankind. It may be taken up in these three things.

1. Man's loss by the fall.
2. What he is brought under by it.
3. What he is liable to in consequence of it.

FIRST, Let us view man's loss by the fall. He has lost communion with God. He enjoyed it before that fatal period; but now it is gone. It implies two things. 1. A saving interest in God as his God. Man could then call God his own God, his Maker, his Husband, his Friend, his Portion, being in covenant with him. 2. Sweet and comfortable society and fellowship with God: and all this without a mediator, God and man not having been enemies or at variance. This sweet and agreeable communion he lost, as appears from Gen. iii. 8. where it is said, 'They (our first parents) heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.' When God spoke to him before, it was refreshing and comfortable to him; but now it was a terror to him; evidently shewing that all correspondence was broke up.

Thus man lost God, Eph. ii. 12. the greatest and the fountain of all other losses. He is no more the God of fallen men, till by a new covenant they get a new interest in him. This is the greatest of all losses and miseries. Had the sun been for ever darkened in the heavens, it had been no such loss as this. God is the cause and fountain of all good; and the loss of him must be the loss of every thing that is good and excellent. Man is a mere nothing without God; a nothing in nature without his common presence, and a nothing in happiness without his gracious presence, Psal. xxx. 5. 'In his favour is life.' Psal. lxiii. 3. 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.' That day man fell, the foundation of the earth was drawn away, and all fell down together; the soul and the life departed from all men, and left them all dead, having lost God, the fountain of life and joy. Hence we may infer,

1. Man is a slave to the devil, 2 Tim. ii. 26. When the soul is gone, men may do with the body what they will; and when God is gone, the devil may do with the soul what he will. Man without God is like Samson without his hair, quite weak and unable to resist his spiritual enemies, as Samson to oppose the Philistines. Satan has over men in nature the power of a master, Rom. vi. 16. so that when he bids them go, they go; and when to come, they come;—that of a conqueror, and so he makes them his slaves and vassals;—and that of a jailor, keeping them fast bound in chains, so that they cannot escape from his clutches, Isa. lxi. 1.

2. Man has lost his covenant-right to the creatures which he had when in favour with his Maker; and therefore Adam was driven out of paradise. Men have no right to the creatures, or their service now, but that of common providence, until it be otherwise restored by their coming into the bond of the new covenant.

3. Hence man is in a fruitless search after happiness in the creatures, set, as a poor infant that hath lost the breasts, to suck at the dry breasts of the creatures, where nothing is to be met with but continued disappointments.

4. Man cannot help himself, John xv. 5. His help is alone in God in Christ, without whom one can do nothing. He is like a poor infant exposed, that cannot help itself, Ezek. xvi. He is like one grievously wounded, who can neither make a plaster for his wounds nor apply it. Ah! how miserable is the case of man under the fall!

SECONDLY; Let us consider what man is brought under by the fall.

1. He is brought under God's wrath. Hence sinners are said to be 'the children of wrath,' Eph. ii. 3. Wrath in God is mixed with no perturbation, but is pure from all discomposure. It imports,

(1.) That sinners are under the displeasure of God. He can take no delight in them; but his soul loaths them. There is a holy fire of anger burning in his breast against them. Should the sun be continually under a cloud, and the heavens ever covered with blackness, what a miserable place would the world be? But that is nothing to the divine anger: 'Who knows the power of thine anger?' says the Psalmist, Psal. xc. 11.

(2.) God deals with them as with enemies, Nah. i. 2.

'God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious, the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries ; and he reserveth wrath for his enemies,' Isa. i. 24.—'Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.' To have men in power enemies to us, is sad ; but to have God an enemy, is beyond expression dreadful: seeing we can neither fight nor flee from him, and he can pursue the quarrel through all eternity

2. They are under his curse, Gal, iii. 10. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Now, God's curse is the binding over the sinner to all the direful effects of his wrath. This is the dreadful yoke which the broken law wreaths about the neck of every sinner as in a natural state. God's curse is the tying of a sinner to the stake, that the law and justice of God may disburden all their arrows into his soul, and that in him may meet all the miseries and plagues that flow from the avenging wrath of God.

Thus every sinner, while in a natural state, is under the wrath and curse of God ; a burden on him, that if not removed by him who was made under the law, and bore the curse thereof, will sink sinners into the lowest pit of hell.

THIRDLY, Let us next consider what man is liable to, both in this world and that which is to come.

First, In this world, he is liable.

1. To all the miseries of this life. Now these are twofold.

1st, Outward miseries. There is a flood of these that man is subject to; as,

(1.) God's curse upon the creature for our sake, Gen. iii. 17. 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake.' Under the weight of this curse the whole creation groans and travails in pain, longing for deliverance. It is not the groan of a wearied beast desiring to be disburdened of its load, but a groan the effect of the fall of man. The treason and rebellion of man against his rightful Lord and Sovereign, brought distress and misery upon all that was formed for his use; as when the majesty of a prince is violated by the rebellion of his subjects, all that belongs to them, and was before the free gift of the prince, is forfeited and taken from them. Their lands, palaces, cattle, even all that pertains to

them, bear the marks of his sovereign fury. Consult Deut. xxviii. 15, &c.

(2.) Outward miseries, such as sword, famine, and pestilence. Many times the curse of the Lord makes the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron, binds up the clouds, and restrains their necessary influences, so that the fruits of the earth are dried up. It raises divisions, wars, and mutinies in a kingdom. All the confusions and disorders which are to be seen among men, are the woful fruits and native results of sin. It kindles and blows up the fire of discord in families, cities, and nations. This is that fury that brings a smoking firebrand from hell, and sets the whole world in a combustion. Pride and ambition, covetousness and desire of revenge, have made the world a stage of the most bloody tragedies. We have some terrible threatenings with respect to these judgments, Deut. xxviii. Lev. xxvi. And they are all summed up in one verse, Ezek. v. 17, 'I will send upon you famine, and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee, and I will bring the sword upon thee: I the Lord have spoken it.'

(3.) Miseries on men's bodies, sickness and bodily pains, as burning fevers, languishing consumptions, distorting convulsions, ugly deformities, gout and gravel, and all the dismal train of wasting diseases and acute pains. Sin hath made man's body a seminary of diseases, and planted in it the fatal seeds and principles of corruption and dissolution, and made him liable to attacks from all distempers, from the torturing stone to the wasting consumption,

(4.) On our estates, as losses, crosses, wrongs, and oppressions. How often do those in trade suffer heavy losses by the bankruptcies of their debtors, by unfair practices, and sinistrous dealings, by cheating and tricking, by extortion and rapine, &c?

(5.) On our names, by reproach, disgrace, &c. Many estates are blasted, and families reduced to poverty and contempt, which sometime have made a good figure in the world. People are made to groan under pinching straits and wants, and yet they seldom consider the bitter root from which all this springs. It is sin that makes men poor, mean, low, and contemptible in the world, and that brings reproach and disgrace upon their names, Deut. xxviii. 37.

(6.) On our employments and callings. These are many times full of pain, labour, and disappointments. Men earn wages, and put it into a bag with holes, and they disquiet and vex themselves in vain. Whence are our cares and fears but from sin? Fear is the ague of the soul that sets it a shaking. Some fear want, and others alarms. Whence come all the disappointments of our hopes and expectations but from sin? When we look for comfort, there is a cross; where we expect honey and sweetness, there we find worm-wood and gall.

(7.) On our relations, unequal uncomfortable marriages, false and treacherous friends, harsh and cruel masters, un- dutiful and unfaithful servants. It is sin that makes children ungrateful and undutiful to parents; they that should be as the staff of their parents old age, are as a sword many times to pierce their hearts. It is sin that makes wives dis- obedient to their husbands, and to defile their beds.

Sally, Inward spiritual miseries: As (1.) 'Blindness of mind,' Eph. iv. 18. the devil putting out the eyes that would not receive the light of the gospel, 1 Cor. iv. 4. (2.) 'A reprobate sense,' Rom. i. 28. whereby men are left of God, so as to have no sense of discerning betwixt good and evil, but take bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. (3.) 'Strong delusions,' 2 Thess. ii. 11. whereby men, forsaking the truth, doat on the fancies and imaginations of their own hearts, and embrace lies for solid truths. (4.) 'Hard- ness of heart,' Rom. ii. 5. whereby men's hearts are hard- ened from the fear of the Lord, and proof against convic- tion, and means used for awakening them. (5.) 'Vile affections,' Rom. i. 26, eagerly desiring sin and vanity, and all manner of filthiness, without regard to the dictates of reason and a natural conscience. (6.) *Lastly*, Fear, sor- row, and horror of conscience, which torment men, em- bitter life, and often bring death in their train, Isaiah xxxiii. 14.

2. At the end of this life, man is liable to death, Rom. vi. 23. 'The wages of sin is death.' The soul must be separated from the body; the man falls into the hands of the king of terrors, and goes down to the house appointed for all living.

Object. But if these things be the effects of the fall, how comes it that those who are delivered from the curse of the

law and the wrath of God by Jesus Christ, sustain these outward miseries, and die as well as others? *Ans.* Because the delivery is but imperfect; but when they shall be free from sin, they shall be free from all these. In the mean time there is a great difference betwixt them: for the sting of God's wrath as a judge is taken out of them to the godly, and they are not accomplishments of the threatenings of the covenant of works, Rom. vi. 14. but of those of the covenant of grace, Psal. lxxxix. 31, 32, 33. and why may not the Lord take some of those things threatened under the covenant of works, and give them a gospel-die, and inflict them according to the second covenant, as well as he does with the commands, which they are still obliged to obey?

Secondly, Let us consider what man is liable to in the world to come. He is liable to the pains of hell for ever. There the Jordan of wrath will overflow all its banks, and that throughout eternal ages. These pains of hell consist in two things, the punishment of loss, and the punishment of sense.

1. In the punishment of loss. This is unspeakably great, and cannot be sufficiently set forth by the tongue of man, I shall only glance at it a little, without enlarging on particulars. (1.) They will lose all the good things which they enjoyed here in the world, their wealth, their riches, their profits and pleasures, and whatever things they set their heart on while here. (2.) The favourable presence and enjoyment of God and Christ. They will be for ever banished from the beatific vision of God in glory. For he will say to them at the last day, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,' Matth. xxv. 41. (3.) The blessed company and society of the holy angels and glorified saints in heaven. (4.) All the glory and blessedness above. (5.) All pity and compassion, having none to commiserate their condition, or regard their pain. (6.) All hope and expectation of deliverance and outgate from their misery. (7.) All possibility of deliverance from their torments. The door of the pit shall be shut upon them for ever, and their fetters shall never be loosed. Thus sinners in hell shall lose every thing that is good and agreeable, even God the chief good, and all the happiness he has prepared for them that love him.

2. In the punishment of sense. They shall suffer the most grievous torments both in soul and body, and that without intermission, for evermore. These torments are beyond expression, and our most fearful thoughts cannot equal the horror of them. 'Who knows the power of thine anger?' says the Psalmist. No man can tell what those plagues and woes are which infinite justice and almighty power hath prepared for obstinate sinners. O that we may be prevailed upon to flee from this wrath that is to come; that so we may not fall into the hands of the living God, and may not be made the dreadful objects of everlasting vengeance.

I conclude with a few inferences:

1. See here the great evil of sin. Many reckon it but a small matter to transgress God's holy and righteous law. They can curse and swear, lie and steal, and commit many other enormous crimes, and yet have no trouble or remorse about it. But if they would consider the dreadful effects of sin, they would be of another mind. Sin is the worst of evils, and big with all kinds of evils whatsoever. It has brought a flood of miseries into the world, which has overflowed the whole creation, under the weight of which the earth and all its inhabitants are groaning. It is the great makebate between God and sinners; it has shut the door of access to God upon us, and exposed us to his wrath and curse in this life and that which is to come.

2. Woful is the case of all who are in a state of nature. They are far from God; they have no interest in or fellowship with him; they are under his wrath and curse, liable to all the miseries of this life, and to the vengeance of eternal fire in the world to come. They are fallen under the power and tyranny of the devil, and if mercy prevent not, shall dwell with him in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever. Whatever your situation and circumstances in the world may be, O ye that are yet in your natural state, ye are in a miserable condition; for ye are without God, the fountain of all good. Ye may read, pray, and communicate, but ye can have no communion with God. Men may be pleased with and bless you; but ye are under God's wrath and curse; and will continue so till ye by faith embrace God in Christ as your God.

3. *Lastly*, Arise, O ye sinners who are yet in your natural state, and depart; for this is not your rest. Come to the

Lord Jesus, who alone can open the door of access to God, whose blood quenches the fire of wrath, and who can deliver from the curse of the law. Who would stay in a house ready to fall? who can sleep sound in a case where God is an enemy? Lay these things seriously to heart, and flee from the wrath ye lie under, for the plague is begun already; and speedily flee from the wrath to come: for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

OF ELECTION TO EVERLASTING LIFE.

EPH. i. 3, 4, 5.—*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

THE answer to the question, ‘Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?’ contains two heads of doctrine, of great importance in the Christian system, viz. the doctrine of election, and the covenant of grace, each of which I shall speak to distinctly. I shall discourse of the first from the text now read. In which we have,

1. A party brought out of their natural state into a state of salvation, ver. 3.—*Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.* For whereas by nature they were under the curse, now they are blessed, and that plentifully, with all blessings, not temporal only, but spiritual and heavenly, coming from heaven, and to be consummated there.

2. The person by whom they are brought into this state. It is by the Redeemer, as the purchaser. God the Father bestows them, as the Father of Christ, viz. for his sake. And they are blessed *in Christ*, upon the account of his merit, and coming from him as their Head.

3. Who those are whom God brings out of their natural state into a state of grace; the elect, ver. 4, 5. *According as he hath chosen us in him, &c.* Where consider,

(1.) Election itself, *he hath chosen us*, separated us from others in his purpose and decree, selected us from among the rest of mankind, whom he passed by and left to perish in their natural state.

(2.) That to which they are elected: that is, to salvation, and the means leading thereto. The means are, sanctification, *that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*; and adoption, ver. 5. that whereas they are by nature children of the devil, they should be children of God. The end is everlasting life in heaven; for that is imported in adoption, Rom. viii. 23. as the inheritance of the children of God.

(3.) Through whom this decree is to be executed, *in him*; that is, Christ, whom the Father chose to be the head of the elect, through whom he would save them.

(4.) When God elected them, *before the foundation of the world*, ere they were created; that is, from eternity; as appears from what our Lord says to his Father, John xvii. 24. *'Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world;'* which can denote nothing else than from eternity.

(5.) That which moved him to elect them, *according to the good pleasure of his will*; that is, his mere good pleasure; so he would do it; and there was nothing without himself to move him thereto.

The words afford a foundation for the following doctrine.

Doct. "God left not all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery, but having from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, brings them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer."

In illustrating this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What election is:

II. Who are elected;

III. What they are chosen to.

IV. The properties of this election.

V. That all the elect, and only they, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.

VI. By whom they are saved.

VII. Lastly, Conclude with some improvement:

Our first business is, to shew what election is. It is that free will of God whereby some men are chosen out from among the rest of mankind, and appointed to obtain eternal life by Jesus Christ, flowing from the mere good pleasure of

God ; as appears from the text. So the elect are they whom God has chosen to everlasting life, Acts xiii. 48. God seeing all mankind lost in Adam from all eternity, in his decree separated some from among them, to be redeemed by his Son, sanctified by his Spirit, and brought to glory.

II. I proceed to shew who are elected. Who they are in particular, God only knows ; but in general we say,

That it is not all men, but some only. For where all are taken, there is no choice made. To say that God has made choice, plainly imports that others are not chosen, but passed by. And so there is another party of men who are reprobated ; that is, whom God has not chosen to life, but has decreed to let them lie in their natural state, and to damn them for their sins, Jude 4 ; whom he shews not saving mercy unto, but hardens, they first hardening themselves, Rom. ix. 18. Here is no injustice in God, seeing he might have left all to perish as well as some. This is also clear from plain scripture, Mat. xx. 16. ‘ Many are called, but few chosen.’ Whence also it is plain, that the elect are the lesser number of the world, Mat. vii. 13, 14. ‘ Enter ye in at the strait gate (says Christ) ; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat : Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.’ They are a *little flock*, Luke xii. 32. Yet the efficacy of the Lord’s love and Christ’s death is more and greater than that of Adam’s sin, seeing it is greater to save one soul than to ruin all. And further, the scripture teaches, that though God has his own of all sorts, yet it is not of those that are highest among men, and most honourable, that God has most made up this blessed company, 1 Cor. i, 26, 27, 28. ‘ Ye see your calling ; how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.’

III. The next head is, to shew what they are chosen to.

1. They are chosen to be partakers of everlasting life. Hence the scripture speaks of some being ‘ ordained to eter-

nal life,' Acts xiii. 48. and of 'appointing them to obtain salvation,' 1 Thess. v. 9. 'God appoints some to be rich, great, and honourable, some to be low and mean in the world; and others to be in a middle station, objects neither of envy nor contempt; but electing love appoints those on whom it falls to be saved from sin, and all the ruins of the fall; its great view is to eternal glory in heaven. To this they were appointed before they had a being.

2. They are chosen also to grace as the mean, as well as to glory as the end. God's predestinating of them to eternal blessedness includes both, as in the text; and it further appears from 2 Thess. ii. 13. 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' Hence faith is held out as a certain consequent of election, Acts xiii. 48. 'As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed.' The man who intends to dwell in a house yet unbuilt, intends also the means by which it may be made a fit habitation. So God having from eternity pitched on a select number of the ruined race of mankind as objects of his love, and having predestinated them to everlasting life, intended also the means necessary and proper for obtaining that glorious end. And therefore there is no ground from the decree of election to slight the means of salvation. God has so joined the end and the means, that none can put them asunder.

IV. Let us consider the properties of election.

1. It is altogether free, without any moving cause, but God's mere good pleasure. No reason can be found for this but only in the bosom of God. There is nothing before, or above, or without his purpose, that can be pitched upon as the cause of all that grace and goodness that he bestows upon his chosen ones. There was no merit or motive in them, as Christ told his disciples, John xv. 16. 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' His choice is antecedent to ours. The persons who are singled out to be the objects of his special grace, were a part of lost mankind, the same by nature with others who were passed by, and left to perish in their sin. When God had all Adam's numerous progeny under the view of his all-seeing eye, he chose some, and passed by others. He found nothing in the creature to cast the balance of his choice, or to determine it to one more than another. Those that were rejected were as eligible as those that

were chosen. They were all his creatures, and all alike obnoxious to his wrath by sin. It was grace alone that made the difference. 'So the prophet argues, Mal. i. 2, 3. 'I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.' And this is abundantly clear in the text. Why doth God write some men's names in the book of life, and leave out others? why doth he enrol some whom he intends to make citizens of Zion, and heirs of immortal glory, and refuse to put others in his register? The text tells us, it is the *good pleasure of his will*.

You may, says an eminent divine, render a reason for many of God's actions, till you come to this, which is the top and foundation of all; and this act can be reduced to no other head of reason, but to that of his royal prerogative. If you inquire, why doth God save some, and condemn others at last? the reason is, because of the faith of the one, and the unbelief of the other. But why do some men believe? It is because God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied these means with the power and efficacy of the Spirit. But why did God accompany these means with the efficacy of his Spirit in some, and not in others? It is because he decreed by his grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree and chuse some to glory, and not others? Into what can you resolve this, but only into his sovereign pleasure? Salvation and damnation at the last upshot are acts of God as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, giving life and eternal happiness to believers, and inflicting death and eternal misery upon unbelievers, conformable to his own law. Men may render a reason for these proceedings. But the choice of some and the preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a sovereign monarch, before any law was actually transgressed, because not actually given. What reason can be given for his advancing one part of matter to the noble dignity of a star, and leaving another part to make up the dark body of the earth? to compact one part into a glorious sun, and another part into a hard rock, but his royal prerogative? What is the reason that a prince subjects one malefactor to condign punishment, and lifts up another to a place of profit and trust? It is merely because he will, Rom. ix. 18; Hence we may infer,

(1.) That God did not chuse men to everlasting life and happiness for any moral perfection that he saw in them; because he converts those, and changes them by his grace, who are most sinful and profligate, as the Gentiles, who were soaked in idolatry and superstition. He found more faith among the Romans, who were Pagan idolaters, than among the Jews, who were the peculiar people of God, and to whom his heavenly oracles were committed. He planted a saintship at Corinth, a place notorious for the infamous worship of Venus, a superstition attended with the grossest uncleanness; and at Ephesus, that presented the world with a cup of fornication in the temple of Diana. And what character had the Cretians from one of their own poets, mentioned by the apostle in his epistle to Titus, whom he had placed among them to further the progress of the gospel, but the vilest and most abominable? liars, and not to be credited; evil beasts, not to be associated with; slow bellies, fit for no service. Now, what merit and attractive was here? What invitements could he have from lying, beastliness, and gluttony, but only from his own sovereignty? By this he plucked firebrands out of the burning, while he left straiter and more comely sticks to consume to ashes.

(2.) God doth not chuse men to grace and glory for any civil perfection that is in them; because he calls and renews the most despicable. He doth not elevate nature to grace on account of wealth or honour, or any civil station and dignities in the world, 1 Cor. i. 26. forecited. A purple robe is very seldom decked and adorned with the jewel of grace. He takes more of the mouldy clay, than of refined dust, to cast into his image, and lodges his treasures more in the earthly vessels, than in the world's golden ones. Should God impart his grace most to those who abound in wealth and honour, it had laid a foundation for men to think, that he had been moved by those vulgarly esteemed excellencies, and to indulge them more than others. But such a conceit languisheth, and falls to the ground, when we behold the subjects of divine grace as void originally of any allurements as they are full of provocations.

(3.) Their foreseen faith and good works, or perseverance in either of them, are not the cause of election; because these are the fruits and effects, and therefore cannot be the

causes of election, Rom. viii. 29. Acts xiii. 48. It is clear also from this text, where it is said, they are chosen to be holy, and to adoption, and therefore to faith, by which we obtain it, John i. 12. God did not chuse and elect men to grace and glory because they were holy, or because he did foresee that they would be so, but that he might purify and make them holy. And let it be observed, that the scripture attributes election only to God's good pleasure, Rom. ix. 11, 13; 16. Mat. xi. 25. And indeed, if it depended on foreseen faith or good works, we should rather be said to chuse God than he to chuse us.

4. God did not chuse some to life and happiness, because he was under any obligation to do so. He is indebted to none, and he is disobliged by all. He was under no tie to pity man's misery, and repair the ruins of the fall. He owes no more debt to fallen man than to fallen angels, to restore them to their first station by a superlative grace. God as a Sovereign gave laws to man, and strength sufficient to observe them. Now, what obligation is upon God to repair that strength which man hath wilfully lost, and to pull him out of that miserable pit into which he had voluntarily plunged himself? None at all. So then there was nothing in the elect more than others to move God to chuse them either to grace or glory. It was, and must be, the gracious issue and result of his sovereign will and mere good pleasure.

2. Election is eternal. They are elected from all eternity, Eph. i. 4. *chosen before the foundation of the world*, 2 Tim. i. 9. 'He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' All God's decrees are eternal, Eph. i. 11. 'We are predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. God takes no new counsels, to do which would be inconsistent with his infinite perfection. Because God is eternal, his purposes must be of equal duration with his existence. And to imagine that an infinitely wise and sovereign Being existed from eternity, without any forethought, or resolution what to do, would be to suppose him to be undetermined or unresolved, at the time of his giving being to all things. And to suppose that the divine will is capable of new determi-

nations, is to argue him to be imperfect; which would be as much an instance of mutability in him, as for him to alter his purpose. Election to everlasting life, must therefore be eternal.

3. It is particular and definite. God has chosen a certain number of the children of men to life, whom he knows by name, so as they can neither be more nor fewer. Hence their names are said to be written in the book of life, Luke x. 20. Phil. iv. 3. and others are said not to be written there, Rev. xvii. 8. Though they are known to none, yet God knows them all, 2 Tim. ii. 19. And they are given to Christ, John xvii. 9. Therefore God's decree of election is not a general decree only to save all that shall believe and persevere in the faith; for that way it might happen that none at all might be saved.

4. It is secret, or cannot be known, till God be pleased to discover it. Hence it is called 'the mystery of his will,' Eph. i. 9. as being hid in God from before the foundation of the world, and would for ever have been so, had he not discovered it in his word.

It is unchangeable. Mutability is an imperfection peculiar to creatures. As the least change in God's understanding, so as to know more or less than that hid from eternity, would be an instance of imperfection; the same must be said with respect to his holy will, which cannot be susceptible of new determinations. Though there are many changes in the external dispensations of his providence, which are the result of his will, as well as the effects of his power; yet there is no shadow of change in his purpose. No unforeseen occurrence can render it expedient for God to change his mind, nor can any higher power oblige him to do it; nor can any defect of power to accomplish his designs, induce him to alter his purpose. Those who are once elected can never be reprobated. All that are elected shall most certainly be saved. None of them can be left to perish. For all the divine purposes are unchangeable, and must be fulfilled, Isa. xlv. 10.; and this in particular, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Election is the foundation of God's house, laid by his own hand, which cannot be shaken, but stands sure; and a sealed foundation, as men seal what they will have; a seal of two parts securing it; on God's part, God loves and keeps them that are his, that they fall not away; on our part, the same

God takes care that his elect depart from iniquity. It is not possible they can be totally and finally deceived, Matth. xxiv: 24. and whom God has chosen he glorifies, Rom. viii. 29, 30. When we are bid make our election sure, it is meant of certainty and assurance as to our knowledge of it, and by no means of God's purpose.

V. The next thing is to shew, that all the elect, and they only, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.

1. All the elect are redeemed by Christ, John x. 15. 'I lay down my life for the sheep,' says he. They are all in due time, by the power of the Spirit, regenerated, converted, and brought to Christ, and get faith to lay hold on him, John vi. 37. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' Acts xiii. 48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Everlasting love at length breaks forth in bringing them to grace, Jer. xxxi. 3. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' They are all justified, adopted, and sanctified, Rom. viii. 30.; and all of them persevere in grace, John xvii. 12. 1 Pet. i. 5. And all this by virtue of their election, Tit. ii. 14.

2. None other but the elect are brought into a state of salvation; none but they are redeemed, sanctified, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, John xvii. 9. Christ prays not for them. Those that perish were never redeemed, nor experienced a saving change passing upon them, as appears from Rom. viii. 29, 30. and 1 John ii. 19. God has passed them by, and suffers them to perish in their sin and guilt.

VI. I come to shew by whom the elect are saved. It is by Christ the Redeemer. Hence the apostle says, Tit. iii. 4, 5, 6. 'After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' There is no other way of salvation but by him, Acts iv. 12. By him is all grace and glory purchased, and by his satisfaction there is a way opened for the venting of mercy with the good leave of justice. More particularly,

1. Before the elect could be delivered from that state of sin and misery into which they had brought themselves, a

valuable satisfaction behoved to be given to the justice of God for the injury done by sin. It is evident from scripture, that God stood upon full satisfaction, and would not remit one sin without it. Several things plead strongly for this :

As, (1.) The infinite purity and holiness of God. There is a contrariety in sin to the holiness of his nature, which is his peculiar glory; and from thence his hatred of it doth arise, which is as essential to him as his love to himself. The infinite purity and rectitude of his nature infers the most perfect abhorrence of whatever is opposite to it. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. v. 4, 5. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' God cannot but hate all the workers of iniquity, and he cannot but punish them. His holiness is not only voluntary, but by necessity of nature. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.

(2.) The justice of God pleads for a valuable satisfaction for sin. And here we are not to consider God as a private person wronged, but as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, and the sovereign Protector of those sacred laws by which the reasonable creature is to be directed. Now, as it was most reasonable and convenient, that at the first giving of the law he should lay the strongest restraint upon man for preventing sin by the threatening of death; so it was most just and congruous, when the law was broken by man's rebellion; that the penalty should be inflicted either upon the person of the offender, according to the immediate intent of the law, or that satisfaction equivalent to the offence should be made, that the majesty and purity of God might appear in his justice. He is the Judge of all the earth, and cannot but do right,

(3.) The wisdom of God, by which he governs the rational world, admits not of a dispensation or relaxation of the threatening without a valuable satisfaction. For it is as good to have no king as no laws for government, and as good to have no law as no penalty, and as good that no penalty be annexed to the law as no execution of it. Hence, says a learned divine, It is altogether indecent, especially to the wisdom and righteousness of God, that that which prove-

both the execution of the law, should procure the abrogation of it, as that should supplant and undermine the law, for the alone prevention of which the law was made. How could it be expected, that men should fear and tremble before God, when they should find themselves more scared than hurt by his threatenings against sin?

(4.) The truth and veracity of God required a satisfaction for sin. The word had gone out of God's mouth, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;' and again it is said, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Now, this sentence was immutable, and the word that had gone out of his mouth must stand. Had God violated his truth by dispensing with the punishment threatened, he had rendered himself an unfit object of trust; he had exposed all the promises or threatenings which he should have made after man's impunity, to the mockery and contempt of the offender, and excluded his word from any credit with man for the future. And therefore God's word could not fall to the ground without an accomplishment. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall stand firm. He will be true to his threatenings, though thousands and millions should perish.

2. As satisfaction to justice was necessary, and that which God insisted upon, so the elect could not give it themselves, neither was there any creature in heaven or earth that could do it for them. Heaven and earth were at an infinite loss to find out a ransom for their souls. We may apply to this purpose what we have, Isa. lxiii. 5. 'I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold.' This is the desperate and forlorn condition of the elect by nature as well as others.

3. God pitched upon Christ in his infinite grace and wisdom as the fittest person for managing this grand design. Hence it is said, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' And the apostle saith, he 'hath set him forth to be a propitiation for sin.' On this account he is called 'his servant whom he hath chosen, and his elect in whom his soul delighteth.' God speaks to them, as Job xxxiii. 24. 'Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.'

4. Christ accepted the office of a Redeemer, and engaged to make his soul an offering for sin. He cheerfully under-

took this work in that eternal transaction that was between the Father and him. He was content to stand in the elect's room, and to submit himself to the terrible strokes of vindictive justice. He is brought in by the Psalmist offering himself as a Surety in their stead, Psal. xl. 6, 7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, &c. Then said I, Lo, I come.' &c. He willingly yielded to all the conditions requisite for the accomplishment of our redemption. He was content to take a body, that he might be capable to suffer. The debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant performed, but in the human nature. He was therefore to have a nature capable of and prepared for sufferings. Hence it is said, Heb. x. 5. 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me.' It behoved him to have a body to suffer that which was represented by these legal sacrifices wherein God took no pleasure. And he took a body of flesh, surrounded with the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted. He condescended to lay aside the robes of his glory, to make himself of no reputation, to take upon him the form of a servant, and be found in the likeness of men.

5. Christ satisfied offended justice in the room of the elect, and purchased eternal redemption for them. 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' Phil. ii. 8. This was the prime article in the covenant of grace, 'When he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,' Isa. liii. 10. God required this sacrifice exclusive of all others in the first treaty. 'Sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou wouldst not; in them thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come,' &c. These sacrifices were entirely useless for the satisfaction of justice, though fit to prefigure the grand sacrifice that God intended. It was by the death of Christ alone that redemption was purchased for men, Rom. v. 10, Eph. ii. 13. Col. i. 21. And when he was upon the cross, he cried, 'It is finished;' that is, the work of redemption is accomplished; I have done all that was appointed for me to do; the articles on my part are now fulfilled; there remain no more deaths for me to suffer.

Thus the elect are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall conclude all with a few inferences.

1. Behold here the freedom and glory of sovereign grace, which is the sole cause why God did not leave all mankind

to perish in the state of sin and misery, as he did the fallen angels. He was no more obliged to the one than the other. Why did he chuse any of the fallen race of men to grace and glory? It was his mere good pleasure to pitch on some, and pass by others. He could have been without them all, without any spot either on his happiness or justice; but out of his mere good pleasure he pitched his love on a select number, in whom he will display the invincible efficacy of his sovereign grace, and thereby bring them to the fruition of glory. This proceeds from his absolute sovereignty. Justice or injustice comes not into consideration here. If he had pleased, he might have made all the objects of his love; and if he had pleased he might have chosen none, but have suffered Adam and all his numerous offspring, to sink eternally into the pit of perdition. It was in his supreme power to have left all mankind under the rack of his justice; and, by the same right of dominion, he may pick out some men from the common mass, and lay aside others to bear the punishment of their crimes. There is no cause in the creature but all in God. It must be resolved into his sovereign will. So it is said, Rom ix. 15, 16. He saith to Moses, 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' And yet God did not will without wisdom. He did not chuse hand over head, and act by mere will without reason and understanding. An infinite wisdom is far from such a kind of procedure. But the reason of God's proceedings is inscrutable to us, unless we could understand God as well as he understands himself. The rays of his infinite wisdom are too bright and dazzling for our weak and shallow capacities. The apostle acknowledges not only a wisdom in his proceeding, but riches and a treasure of wisdom; and not only that, but a depth and vastness of these riches of wisdom; but was wholly incapable to give a scheme and inventory of it. Hence he cries out, Rom. xi. 33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Let us humbly adore the divine sovereignty. We should cast ourselves down at God's feet, with a full resignation of ourselves to his sovereign pleasure. This is a more becoming carriage in a Christian, than contentious endeavours to measure God by our line.

2. This doctrine should stop mens murmurings and silence all their pleadings with or against God. O what strivings are there sometimes in the hearts of men about God's absolute sovereignty in electing some and rejecting others? The apostle insists much upon this in Rom. ix. where, having represented the Lord speaking thus by Moses, ver. 13. 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;' he presently prevents an objection, or the strife of man with God about that saying, ver. 19. 'Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?' This is man's plea against the sovereign will of God. But what saith the Lord by the apostle to such a pleader? We have his reproof of him for an answer, in ver. 20. 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' The apostle brings in this argument as to man's eternal state, He must not strive with God about that. He must not say, Why doth God find fault with man? His absolute power in his reason why he disposeth thus or thus of thee, or any other man. He will give thee no account why it is so; but his own will to have it so. He may chuse some for the glory of his rich, free, and sovereign grace, and leave others to perish in their sins for the glory of his power and justice. This should stop mens mouths, and make them sit down quietly under all God's dealings.

3. This is ground of humility and admiration to the elect of God, and lets them see to what they owe the difference that is between them and others, even to free grace. Those who are passed by were as eligible as those that were chosen. Though God hath dignified them, and raised them to be heirs of glory, yet they were heirs of wrath, and no better than others by nature, Eph. ii. 3. Well may they say with David in another case, 'Lord, what am I, or what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' All were in the same corrupt mass, and nothing but free grace made the difference between the elected and the non-elected.

4. Then the elect shall not persist in their infidelity and natural state, but shall all be effectually called and brought in to Christ. Whatever good things God hath purposed for them shall surely be conferred upon and wrought in them by the irresistible efficacy of his powerful grace. God's counsel shall stand and he will do all his pleasure.

5. Then people may know that they are elected. Hence is that exhortation, 2 Pet. i. 10, 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' Though we cannot break in at the first hand upon the secrets of God, yet if we do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receive him as our only Saviour, and submit to him as our Lord and Sovereign, we may know that we are elected, seeing the elect and they only are brought to believe. Others may be elected, but they cannot know it till they actually believe.

6. The Lord will never cast off his elect people. He that chose them from eternity, while he saw no good in them, will not afterwards cast them off. God's decree of election is the best security they can have for life and salvation, and a foundation that standeth absolutely sure. Whatever faults and follies they may be guilty of, yet the Lord will never cast them off. They shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

7. *Lastly*, This doctrine may teach us to form our judgment aright concerning the success of the gospel. The gospel and the ministrations thereof are designed for the bringing in of God's chosen ones. All never did nor ever will believe: but one thing is sure, that all who are ordained to eternal life shall believe and obey the gospel, Rom. xi. 7,

OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

Psal. lxxxix. 3.—*I have made a covenant with my chosen,*
 1 Cor. xv. 45.—*The last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

GOD made man upright, and entered into a covenant with him, forbidding him to eat of a certain tree in the garden of Eden, on pain of death, natural, spiritual, and

* The transcriber and preparer of the copy of this work for the press thinks it necessary to inform the reader, that Mr Boston, at three different periods of ministry, preached on *the covenant of grace*, from as many different texts. 1. From Cant. iii. 9. 10. 'King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon,' &c. 2. From Isa. xlii. 6, 7. 'I will give thee for a covenant of the people,' &c. 3. From the two texts fronting this discourse. The first of these cannot now be found, after the strictest search among his papers. The two last are preserved; and of both compared together the following discourse is an abridgment. To have inserted either of them entire, would have swelled this work to a size far exceeding the limits proposed. Neither was it at all necessary, as the public has long been in possession of that valuable piece of our author's entitled, *A View of the Covenant of Grace from the Sacred Records*, &c.

eternal, and promising him, in case of continued obedience, life in its utmost extent. But, alas! man being in honour did not continue a night, but foully revolted from the obedience and allegiance he owed to his mighty Creator and bountiful Sovereign. Thus his misery was originally owing to the breaking of the covenant of works; and in that dismal state he and all his descendants had remained for ever; if God, in the wonderful depths of his amazing love and grace, had not from all eternity devised a method of recovery, by entering into a covenant with his own Son as second Adam, head and representative of those destined by sovereign pleasure to be heirs of salvation. Thus fallen man's recovery, from the first to the last step thereof, is entirely owing to the fulfilling of that covenant entered into betwixt the Father and the Son from eternal ages, and in it the whole mystery of our salvation lies. And this covenant I shall endeavour, through divine assistance, briefly to open up unto you, from the texts now read.

In the verse preceding the first text, there is mention made of a building of mercy, which presupposes miserable ruins, and denotes that this building is intended for the benefit of an elect world ruined by Adam's fall. Free grace and love set on foot this building for them, every stone in which, from the lowest to the highest, is mercy to them: from top to bottom, from the foundation-stone to the top-stone, all is free and rich mercy to them. And the ground of this glorious building is God's covenant with his chosen, *I have made a covenant with my chosen*. In which and the second text four things are to be considered.

1. The foundation on which the building of mercy stands: a covenant, a divine covenant, a sure covenant. The first building for man's happiness, was a building of goodness, bounty, and liberality; but not of mercy, for man was not in misery when it was reared up: it was founded on a cove-

which he prepared for the press in his lifetime, though it was not published till 1734, two years after his death. In this abridgement there are several references made to that book, where the particulars discoursed of are amplified and more largely illustrated; and to prevent the immoderate extension of this work, of two places, viz. in the promissory part of the covenant and the characters Christ sustains as Administrator thereof, no abridgement is made, but the reader referred to the printed treatise. It is supposed, that the reader, in perusing this part of the work, will consult the treatise itself, at the several places referred to. It is proper also to take notice, that several particulars in this discourse, particularly in the introduction and in the application are not to be found in the said treatise, and are here given *verbatim* from the MSS. without any alteration.

nant too, the covenant of works made with the first Adam. This building soon fell in ruins; for being made with man, liable to change, his foot slipt, the covenant was broken, and the building tumbled down in an instant; there was no more safe dwelling there for Adam or his race, though most of them are still seeking shelter about the ruins of this first building, and will not come to the building of mercy. But this covenant is another, and of a different nature; the covenant of eternal life and salvation for poor sinners, the spiritual seed of the head of the covenant, to be given them in the way of free grace and mercy, and in which they are freed from the curse of the law and the wrath of God. The revelation and offer of this covenant unto the sons of men is called the gospel, announcing the glad tidings of life and salvation to ruined sinners.

2. The parties contractors in this covenant, *I and my chosen, the last Adam*. Both heaven and earth were concerned in this covenant; for it was a covenant of peace between them, at variance through sin. And accordingly the interests of both are consulted by the parties contractors.

(1.) On heaven's side is God himself, the party proposer, *I have made a covenant with my chosen*. Though he was the party offended, yet the motion for a covenant comes from him. The Father of Mercies beholding a lost world, his bowels of mercy yearn towards the objects that his sovereign pleasure pitches upon; and that mercy seeks a vent for itself, that it may be shown to the miserable. But justice stands in the way of its egress, unless a method be found to satisfy its claim, in order to pave a passage for the free efflux of mercy. Then saith the Father 'The first covenant will not answer the purpose; another expedient must be fallen upon. The lost creatures cannot contract for themselves; and if another undertake not for them, they must perish; they cannot chuse an undertaker for themselves, I will chuse one for them, and I will make the covenant with my chosen.'

2. On man's side is God's chosen, or chosen One, for the word of God is singular; the son, *the last Adam*. Who else as fit to be undertaker on man's side; who else could have been the Father's choice for this vast undertaking? No angel nor man was capable for it but *the mighty One*, ver. 12, whom the Father points out to us as his chosen, Isa. xlii. 1.

3. The making of this covenant between the parties, *I have made a covenant with my chosen One.* The Father and the Son made this covenant betwixt them; the bargain was completed by mutual agreement. The terms were on both hands fixed, and the compact closed between them, before the objects of mercy existed; even as the covenant of works betwixt God and the first Adam was made, before we breathed in God's air. And therefore, by the by, ye would take notice, that in reference to covenanting with God, ye pretend not to make a covenant of your own, setting down such and such terms for life and salvation, which you will do. All that remains for us in that matter is to take hold of God's covenant; Isa. lvi. 6. to believe the promise, approve cordially of the covenant, and consent to it for our part as agreed betwixt the Father and the second Adam; so shall ye evidence that ye are of those in whose name Christ stood consenting to the covenant. This is our making of a covenant mentioned Psal. l. 5.—‘that have made a covenant with me by or upon a sacrifice,’ viz. by laying their hands, by faith, on the head of the sacrifice, thereupon cut down in their stead; and so transferring the guilt ceremonially on the sacrifice; but really and spiritually approving of the device of salvation by a crucified Saviour, and falling in with it as the method of salvation for them.

The original calls it ‘cutting of a covenant,’ or ‘striking a covenant;’ being a covenant by sacrifice, confirmed with blood; wherein the party contractor on man's side is both the priest and the sacrifice, the Father's wrath the fire that burnt it, and divine justice the sword that cut it down, Zech. xiii. 7. This is most lively represented, Gen. xv. 9. &c.

Before I go farther in the explication, I will speak a little to this observation, ‘That the foundation of all saving mercy to lost sinners is the covenant of grace, the covenant betwixt the Father and the second Adam.’ To clear this, consider,

1. It is the foundation of the first saving mercy that a poor sinner meets with; and that is the first grace given to the dead soul, viz: spiritual life, the new heart, the first resurrection, by which the soul is enabled to believe and embrace Jesus Christ, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. ‘A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’ This is saving mercy, Tit. iii. 5. ‘According to his mercy he saved us by the

washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Upon what bottom can this stone in the building be laid, but on the covenant betwixt the Father and Christ? No doing of the sinner can be pretended here, for life and salvation, since the sinner is really dead spiritually, and can do nothing; but it is a performing of the promise of the covenant to Christ, Eph. ii. 5. 'Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ.'

2. It is the foundation of the middle saving mercies. Look to the soul's actual believing; it is the budding of a promise, a branch of that covenant, Psal. xxii. 29, 31. 'None can keep alive his own soul: They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness.' Compare John vi. 37. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' Justification is the fruit that grows upon it, Isa. liii. 11. 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.' So is Sanctification; they are sanctified in Christ Jesus, in virtue of that covenant, as they were corrupted and defiled in Adam by virtue of the breach of the first covenant, 1 Cor. i. 2. compare Ezek. xxxvi. 25. 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.' This is an absolute promise with respect to the sinner. All their obedience itself, and persevering in holy obedience, are fruits of the covenant, ver. 27. 'I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,' Jer. xxxii. 40. 'I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me;' and so belong to the promise of it, and are no part of the proper condition of it, which must go before partaking of the fruits of it.

3. It is the foundation of the crowning mercy, eternal life in heaven, Tit. i. 2. To whom could this be promised before the world began, but to the Son of God in the eternal compact? So that the sinner comes to be partaker of it in him, as he is of death in Adam, John xvii. 2. 'Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' Hence notwithstanding of all the good works of the saints, wrought all their life long, they receive eternal life as freely, and as much a gift, as if they had done nothing, Rom. vi. 21. 'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our

Lord.' Hence they who have done most for God, are as deep in the debt of free grace for their crown, as the thief on the cross, who believed in Christ, and then expired. For all is made over to the several persons of the seed, upon one bottom of the covenant, the proper condition of which was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

To confirm it, consider,

1. The justice of God could not admit of mercy to lost sinners, but upon the ground of this covenant; whereby the repairing of the honour of the law by obedience and suffering was sufficiently provided for, Psal. xl. 6, 7. The first covenant being broken, the breakers must 'die without mercy,' Heb. x. 28. unless salvation to them be brought about by another covenant, that shall repair the breach; which could be no other but that made with the chosen One.

2. All saving relation betwixt Christ and us is founded on that covenant. Christ obeyed and died; but what benefit have the fallen angels thereby? They are left hopeless for all that, and must encounter with unatoned justice. Why? Not that Christ's doing and dying was not able to save them; the blood of infinite value can have no bounds set to its sufficiency: but because their names were not in that covenant, it had no relation to them, but to lost sinners of Adam's race, Heb. ii. 16,

3. The very design of making that covenant was, that it might be the channel of saving mercy, in which the whole rich flood of it might run, for the quickening, purifying, blessing, fructifying, and perfecting of an elect world, lying under the bands of death and the curse by the breach of the first covenant, Psal. lxxxix. 2. 'Mercy shall be built up for ever; compared with the text, *I have made a covenant with my chosen*. It was the Father's design; and it was the Son's design, Cant. iii. 10. Men are apt to devise unto themselves other channels of mercy: but this being the only channel designed by infinite wisdom, here the sinful creature will find saving mercy flowing freely, but all other channels he will find quite dry.

4. *Lastly*, It has been the ground of all the saints expectations and hopes of mercy, in all ages. It was first published in the promise made to Adam, Gen. iii. 15. 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent;' and that

was the stay of the souls of the faithful till Abraham's time: then it was more clearly discovered in the promise given to him, Gen. xxii. 18. 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' The ceremonial law, and the prophecies of Christ, pointed out very fully. And thus believers under the Old Testament built their faith of mercy on it. And since that time it has been most clearly and fully discovered in the gospel; and so the New Testament church have raised their faith of mercy on it,

USE 1. Behold here the freeness of saving mercy. There is a fountain of mercy opened to sinful creatures; and it was not only provided for them without any merit of theirs, but without so much as any application made by them for it, Rom. xi. 34. A covenant of grace is made betwixt the Father and his own Son as party-contractor on man's side, who doth this for their salvation while they knew nothing about the matter. Here is rich and free grace,

2. It is a vain thing to remain about the ruins of the old building, which stood on the covenant of works, and to expect mercy, life, or salvation there, Gal. ii. 16. 'Man is not justified by the works of the law.' It is evident, that men must have mercy now, else he is ruined for ever, without any possible outgate from his misery. If the building of mercy could have been without a new foundation, why was it laid, and laid so deep? But a new foundation was not laid in vain, but because it was necessary that it should be. Therefore expect no mercy in the way of the first covenant. Mount Sinai shews only thunders and lightnings, the voice of the trumpet waxing louder and louder, and the voice of words, which sinners are not able to bear. There is no voice of mercy and grace but from mount Zion.

3. What a wretched disposition in man's nature is it, to be so much addicted to the way of the covenant of works? God saw that there was no hope for fallen man that way; therefore he made a new covenant to build mercy upon. But fallen man will not see it, but still aims to make a shift for himself that way. Our father Adam was well housed indeed in the first building, if he had managed well: but it was by his sin laid in ruins. Yet his sinful children still abide about these ruins, building cottages to themselves of the ruins, seeking righteousness as it were by the works

of the law; Rom. ix. 32. and pretending to repair it for themselves. The Jews were never more addicted to the temple, than mankind naturally is to that building on the first covenant. The Jews, after their temple had been laid in ruins, never to be rebuilt, did notwithstanding, in the days of Julian the apostate, attempt to rebuild it; and ceased not, till by an earthquake which shook the old foundation, and turned all down to the ground, and by fire from heaven which burnt all their tools, they were forced to forbear. Thus it fares with men with respect to the building on the old covenant; they will never give it over, nor cry for a Mediator in earnest, till mount Sinai, where they work, be all on fire about them. O the mischief of this practice! They thereby affront the wisdom of God, which found out this new way; they despise the grace, free love, and mercy of it; they trample upon the great salvation brought about by it, Heb. ii. 3. And withal they fight against their own interest; will not enter by the door that is opened for them, but hang about the door that is closed, and shall never be opened to them, and so perish. Thus they 'forsake their own mercy,' Jonah ii. 8.

4. *Lastly*, Quit the old covenant, then, and take hold of the new, that you may be personally entered into it. This you may do by taking hold of Christ, in the way of believing; for he is given for a covenant of the people, Isa. xlii. 6. So the proposal of the covenant is made to you, Isa. lv. 3. And thus shall ye be lodged in the building of saving mercy; and mercy shall be built up to you for ever. But if you do not take hold of this covenant, ye are off the foundation of mercy, and can look for none of it. But to proceed in the explication of our texts:

4. The nature of the covenant made betwixt these glorious parties. Concerning which we may gather from the texts,

(1.) The design of it, viz. *life*, the most valuable interest of mankind. *The last Adam was made a quickening spirit*, viz. to give life, life in perfection, to dead sinners, dead legally, and dead morally.

(2.) The persons for whom this life was designed, the elect, *I have made a covenant with my chosen*. Christ is the head elect, or head of the company chosen to life. In one and the same decree, the Father chose Christ to be the head,

and them to be the members. Hence we are said to be 'chosen in him,' Eph. i. 4.

(3.) The representation. As in the first covenant Adam, the party contractor on man's side, was a representative, representing and sustaining the persons of all his natural seed; so in this covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, the party contractor and undertaker on man's side, is a representative, representing and sustaining the persons of all his spiritual seed. This appears from his being designed the *second Adam*, who was a type of him, Rom. v. 14. As the first Adam, representing all his seed in the covenant of works, brought sin and death on them; so Christ, representing all his seed in the covenant of grace, brought righteousness and life to them.

(4.) The condition of the covenant laid on the elect's representative, to be performed by him in their name and stead. He was to be the last Adam, to take upon him man's nature, to clothe himself with our flesh, and therein to go through with what the first Adam had stuck in; that is, to fulfil the covenant, by yielding perfect obedience to it, and suffering the penalty thereof in their room.

(5.) The promise of the covenant, to be performed on that condition by the God of truth. This is implied in these words, *I have made a covenant with my chosen*: i. e. 'I have engaged for such and such benefits, and have bound myself by solemn promise to my chosen, on condition of what I have required of him.' This promise contains whatever is necessary for the complete happiness of the mystical body, grace and glory.

5. *Lastly*, There is one thing more specially to be considered, according to these texts, belonging to the nature of this covenant, viz. that the party contractor on man's side is the administrator of the covenant: *The last Adam was made a quickening spirit*. As Christ was God, he could not fail in the performance of his engagement; and therefore God took his single bond for sufficient security; and thereupon he was made administrator of the covenant, Matth. xxviii. 18. He entered on this office at the beginning, and intimated the covenant to fallen Adam in paradise, Gen. iii. 15. and will continue in that office till the last elect soul be brought in. The treasure put into his hand is the promises of the covenant, which are the reward of his own obedience and

death; Col. i. 9. Hence he bequeaths all the promised benefits by testament, and lives to be the executor of it. There is a fulness of the Spirit lodged in him, to be communicated to the elect dead in sins; and he is made a life-giving head unto them, John i. 4. Eternal life was lodged in him, 1 John v. 11.; and it is communicated by him, John xvii. 2. as the great trustee and steward of heaven. In the faith of this, Adam called his wife *Life*, or *an Enlivener*, Gen. iii. 20. No wonder he should be called the covenant itself, Isa. xlii. 6; since he is the head of the covenant, unto whom the elect are joined unto God in covenant, the condition of the covenant was performed by him, and the Father has put the promises of the covenant in his hand. This is good news to men, that the promised life is in the hands of the Mediator, who is of our flesh and bone.

The doctrine arising from the two texts, thus compared and explained, is,

DOCT. 'The covenant of grace for life and salvation to ruined sinners, was made with Christ the second Adam, and he constituted Administrator thereof.'

In handling this important subject; I shall consider,

- I. The parties in the covenant of grace.
- II. The parts of it.
- III. The administration of it;
- IV. Make some practical improvement,

I. I am to consider the parties in the covenant of grace. And these are the party contractor on heaven's side, the party contractor on man's side and the party contracted or undertaken for.

FIRST, Upon the one side is God himself, and God only, as in the covenant of works. As the covenant was made from eternity, there was no other, and no occasion for any other, to see to the interests of heaven in this transaction. I think that God essentially considered was the party contractor in the person of the Father, Tit. i. 2. Eph i. 3. Hereby the Son and the Holy Ghost have their part in the covenant on heaven's side, as the party offended; and in the mean time a peculiar agency in this great work is attributed to the Father on that side, as there is unto the Son on man's side. And that we may have some distinct view of God in this character in the covenant of grace, we must consider the following things.

1. God from eternity decreed the creation of man after his own image, and the making of the covenant with him. This whole dispensation was before the Eternal Mind, in all the parts and appurtenances thereof, though, by reason of making that covenant with a creature, it could not actually take place but in time, Acts xv. 18.

2. He also from eternity decreed to permit man to fall, and so to break that covenant, and thereby to involve himself and all his posterity in ruin. This fall he permitted for his own holy ends, purposing to bring about good from it.

3. God is to be considered in this covenant as an offended God, offended with all the sins of all mankind, original and actual. In the first covenant God contracted with man as with a friend, without the interposition of a mediator: but in the second covenant it was not nor could be so; for man is considered in it as a fallen creature, a transgressor of the law, an enemy to God; and it is a covenant of reconciliation and peace, for those who had been at war with heaven.

4. Yet he is to be considered as a God purposing and decreeing from eternity to manifest the glory of his mercy, free love and grace, in the salvation of some of the lost race of Adam, Eph. iii. 10, 11. Without such a purpose of grace in God, there had never been a covenant of grace.

5. Notwithstanding we are to consider him in this matter as a just God, who cannot but do right, give sin a just recompense, and magnify his holy law and make it honourable. Upon the motion, then, of extending mercy to any of mankind, the justice of God interposeth, and pleads that mercy cannot be shewn, but upon terms agreeable to law and justice. And it was not agreeable either to the nature of God, or to his truth in his word, to shew mercy in prejudice of his exact justice, if a throne of grace is to be erected, it must not be set on the ruins of the justice of God. And therefore justice required,

(1.) That the law which was violated be fully satisfied, and the honour thereof repaired, by suffering and obedience, the former such as may satisfy the sanction of the law and the latter the commanding part thereof. And this the sinners must either do for themselves, or another in their room, who can be accepted as sufficient surety.

(2.) That since it was man that sinned, it must be man also who must suffer and obey, that one nature may not sin, and another be put to suffering for it.

Thus lay the impediments in the way of mercy to fallen man, and who could have removed them but God himself? Man could not here have acted for himself; his ability to obey was lost; and ability to suffer what was due to him for his sin, so as to exhaust it, and deliver himself, he never had. Angels were not able to bear the burden; their finite natures could not have born so as to bear off infinite wrath. Therefore,

6. *Lastly*, The Father pitches upon his own Son for this work, as one able to make way for mercy over all difficulties, and remove the impediments lying in the way of its egress, Psal. lxxxix. 19. He was able for the work as being the Father's Fellow, Zech: xiii. 7.; his equal, Phil. ii. 6; and so one of infinite power and dignity. And here four things are to be considered.

(1.) The Father designed that his own Son, the eternal Word, should, for this purpose of mercy, take on man's nature, and become man, Heb. x. 5. He saw that sacrifice and offering would not answer the case, that the debt was greater than to be paid so easily, and the work greater than to be managed by a person of less dignity. Wherefore, that the darling attribute of mercy might not for ever remain veiled; he wills that the human nature be united to the divine in the person of his own Son.

(2.) He chuseth him to be the head of the election, being one thus in the decree of God raised up from among the people, Psal. lxxxix. 19.; and to be the last Adam, the federal head and representative of such as sovereign pleasure should pitch upon to be vessels of mercy, and enrol in the book of life, that they might have a head who was both God and man, Eph: i. 22.

(3.) He designed a certain number as it were by name to be the constituent members of that body chosen to life, whereof he was the designed head, and gave them to him for that end, Phil. iv. 3. John. xvii. 9. They were a chosen company, whom sovereign grace selected from among the rest, on a purpose of love, and gave to Christ, the last Adam; for a seed, John xvii. 6.: therefore they are said to be chosen in him, Eph. i. 4.

(4.) The Father proposed to him, as the last Adam; the conditions and terms of the new covenant, treating with the elect in him as with all mankind in the first covenant. Now,

he has found one who is able to answer for the lost company, and treats with him in their name, for life and salvation to them, in a suitableness to the honour of law and justice.

Inf. 1. The redemption of the soul is precious. The salvation of sinners was a work greater than the making of the world. The powerful Word commanded, and the last was done : but much more was to be done ere a sinner could be saved from wrath.

2. Think not that Christ is more willing to save you than the Father is. The will of Christ, his Father, and Spirit, is one. And one person of the glorious Trinity cannot be less willing to help poor sinners, than another is. Which should incite and encourage you to come to God by Christ.

3. Behold the matchless love of the Father to lost sinners of Adam's race, 1 John iii. 1. The whole contrivance sprung from his free grace, shewing itself in greatest measure and exceeding riches of grace, Eph. ii. 7. Man lay in the utmost misery before him ; a most miserable creature, needing help, but making no application to him for it, Rom. xi. 34. ; a sinful creature, having nothing in him to provoke liking, but loathing ; a criminal, upon whom justice demanded vengeance ; one whose debt no creature was able to undertake for ; therefore he gave his own Son, a gift of grace without a parallel.

SECONDLY, Upon the other side is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, with the elect, his spiritual seed, Heb. ii. 13. ; the former as the party-contractor and undertaker, the latter as the party contracted and undertaken for : which is a good reason for his name *Immanuel*, Matth. i. 23. The party-contractor then in this covenant with God is our Lord Jesus Christ. He managed the interests of men in this eternal bargain, and there were none of that party with him to help him, nor capable to do it. And he acted in a twofold capacity towards the making of this covenant, as the eternal Word, and the second Adam.

First, As the eternal Word, having no nearer relation to man than as his Creator, and sovereign Lord, John i. 1, 2, 3. Our Lord Jesus Christ is now our near kinsman, the elder brother of the family of mankind, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh ; but from the beginning it was not so. He was from eternity the only begotten Son of God, and by voluntary dispensation only, for the relief of fallen man he

became man, and so was allied to the house of Adam: Here let us consider what our Lord Jesus did as the eternal Word in this covenant, viz. his consenting to it, and the effect of that consent.

1. Let us consider what our Lord Jesus did as the eternal Word in making of this covenant. He consented to the proposals made by his Father, in order to the erecting of a new covenant with lost sinners of Adam's race. God saw there was a necessity of a new bargain for the salvation of any of them; that the old covenant would not answer his purpose of mercy; and that this covenant could not be made, unless his own Son became the head of it. Hereto the Son of God, for the glory of his Father, and the salvation of sinners, readily agreed; and gave his consent.

1st, That he should become man, by taking into a personal union with himself a holy human nature, according to the eternal destination of his Father, Heb. x. 5, 6, 7. He consents to be incarnate, that all flesh might not perish; which was accordingly fulfilled in time, John i. 14. The two families of heaven and earth were at war, and no peace could take place betwixt them but through a Mediator. And where could a fit Mediator be found, a day's-man meet to interpose betwixt such parties, who would not either be too high or too low, in respect of one of the parties at variance? Man or angel would have been too low in respect of God; and an unvailed God would have been too high in respect of sinful man. Wherefore the Son of God, that he might be a fit Mediator betwixt the parties, as he was by his eternal generation high enough, in respect of God, so he consents to become low enough in respect of man, by a temporal generation of a woman.

2^{dly}, That he should be a second Adam, a head and representative of the chosen company, sustaining their persons, and acting in their name, Psal. xl. 6, 7. 'Mine ears hast thou opened,' or 'bored,' as Exod. xxi. 6; thereby intimating his consent to be the Father's servant for ever, in the work of man's salvation. It was evident the breach betwixt God and man was greater than to be taken away by a mere intermessenger, which should go betwixt the parties, and so reconcile them with bare words. There could not be a covenant of peace betwixt God and sinners, without a reparation of damages done to the honour of God, and without

honouring of his holy law by an exact obedience as his subjects: and both of these were quite beyond their reach. The Son of God, beholding the strait sinners were brought to, while they could neither do for themselves, nor any in all the creation could afford them help, saith, 'Lo, I come;' I am content to take their place, and put myself in their room as a second Adam.

Thus was the foundation of the covenant laid, by the Father's proposal, and the consent of his Son thereto, as the eternal Word.

2. Let us consider the effect of this consent of the eternal Word. He was thereby constituted Mediator betwixt God and man, as God-man in one person, 1 Tim. ii. 5. Having had the Father's call thereto, and that call being accepted by his own consent, he was thereby established the great Mediator betwixt God and man, for making and keeping the designed peace between heaven and earth; through whom, and in whom, as a public person, God might enter into a new covenant with sinners of Adam's race. Thus also was he constituted the second Adam, and representative of all the elect, with whom the Father might treat as one answering for them. And was constituted Mediator or Midsman betwixt God and sinners in two respects,

1st, He was constituted Mediator in respect of his natures. He was a substantial Mediator, as partaking of the nature of both parties. He was God equal with the Father from all eternity, and so stood related to heaven: he was designed to be man from eternity, and so stood related to earth. In this divine constitution four things are to be considered.

(1.) That he should be a real man, having a true body, and a reasonable soul, and not be so in appearance only, Heb. ii. 14. that so he might be capable to suffer, since without shedding of blood was no remission; and the divine nature could not suffer,

(2.) That that body of his should not be made of nothing, nor of any thing but what belongs to Adam's family, Pal. lxxxix. 19. Gal. iv. 4; that so he might indeed be one of the family of Adam, Luke iii. ult; a brother of those in whose name he was to act, Heb. ii. 11. and so the same nature that sinned might suffer.

(3.) That that human nature should be united to his divine nature in the way of a personal union, John i. 4; the

divine nature in the person of the Son marrying the human nature to itself, that the Son of God should become as really the Son of man, and of Adam's family, as he was the Son of God, and of the family of heaven. And this to the end that what he might do or suffer in the name of his brethren, might be of infinite value and efficacy, as the deed of a divine person, Acts xx. 28. 1 John i. 7.

(4.) That that human nature to be thus united to the divine in the person of the Son, should be a holy thing; since sinful flesh was not capable of an immediate union with God; and that therefore, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, that substance of the body that was to be prepared for the Mediator, should be separated from all corruption and infection from the first Adam; and the soul and body should both be of a perfectly holy nature, Luke i. 35. This was necessary to qualify him to be Mediator, the last Adam; for had he himself been defiled with the least taint of sin, he could not have expiated the sins of others, Heb. vii. 26, 27.

2dly, As by his consent to become man, he was constituted substantial Mediator; so by his consent to become last (or second) Adam, he was constituted official Mediator betwixt God and man, or Mediator in respect of office, 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. He had his Father's call to the office, Heb. v. 4.; and having consented to and embraced the call, he was invested in the office, and treated with as such from all eternity, Prov. viii. 22, 23.

Now was there one provided to take the desperate cause of lost sinners in hand: a glorious and a mighty One, with whom the new covenant of grace might be made, with safety to the Father's honour and the case of perishing sinners: A fit hand, as partaking of both natures, and invested with that office, which he and only he was fit for. And this brings me to the second capacity wherein he acted in this matter. Then he acted,

Secondly, As the second Adam, head and representative of the election, by the Father's destination and his own consent. What he did as the Eternal Word, made way for the covenant, and was, as it were, the preliminaries of the covenant: but it was in this capacity that the covenant was formally made with him, as appears from our texts already explained.

Now Christ standing in that capacity, as second Adam,

head of the election, did two things, whereby he entered actually into the covenant with his Father.

1. He accepted of the gift of the particular persons elected by name, from all eternity, by his Father, made to him; Heb. ii. 13.; and in token thereof owns them in particular as his brethren, ver. 11. Like as the first Adam, in the making of the first covenant, stood alone without actual issue; yet had destinated for him a numerous issue, even all mankind, who should with him be comprehended in the same covenant; which Adam, virtually at least, accepted: so God having chosen a certain number of lost mankind, he, as their original proprietor, gives them to Christ, the appointed head, to be his members, and comprehended with him in the second covenant, though as yet none of them had a being; and he accepts of the gift of them, is well pleased to take these in particular for his body mystical, for which he should engage in covenant to his Father, John xvii. 6. 10.

2. Christ did in the name and stead of these particular persons elected unto life, and given unto him, consent unto the conditions and terms of the covenant, proposed by the Father for life and salvation to them. And thus the covenant was concluded, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8. Isa. liii. 10. As the first Adam, representing all his natural seed, did in their name and stead consent to the terms and conditions of the first covenant, and so entered into that covenant for them; so the second Adam representing all his spiritual seed, did as a public person, in their name, consent to the terms of the second covenant. And as he had in the eternal decree taken on him their nature, so he did from all eternity put on their person, answer to their names as being in law one person with them, even as the cautioner is with the principal debtor, and the husband with the wife in case of debt, who are one in the eye of the law; and, having heard all the demands of law and justice upon them, he struck hands with the Father, to satisfy all these demands to the utmost.

For clearing of this purpose I shall shew,

1. That the second covenant was made with Christ, as the last Adam, head and representative of the elect.

2. Why it was made so with him.

First, I am to shew, that the second covenant was made with Christ, as the last Adam, head and representative of the elect. Consider,

1. Covenants typical of the covenant of grace were made with persons representing their seed. The covenant of royalty, a type of this covenant, was made with David, as representative of his seed; therefore the covenant of grace typified by it was made with Christ, as the representative of his seed. Hence in our first text the party covenanted with and sworn to is called *David*, which is one of the names of Christ typified by David, Hos. iii. ult. for which cause the mercies of the covenant are called 'the sure mercies of David,' Isa. lv. 3. And this David is God's servant having a seed comprehended with him in the covenant, Psal. lxxxix.

4. To the same purpose it may be observed, that Phinehas' covenant of priesthood was a type of the covenant of grace; and in it Phinehas stood as representative of his seed, typifying Jesus Christ representing his spiritual seed in the covenant of grace, Numb. xxv. 12, 13. This is evident from Psal. cx. 4. where the everlasting priesthood promised to Phinehas has had its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ. Hereto may be added, that the covenant made with Noah and his sons was made with them as the heads of the new world, and representatives of their seed, Gen. ix. 9, 11. And that this covenant was a type of the covenant of grace, and Noah therein a type of Christ, is clear from its being established on a sacrifice, Gen. viii. 20, 21.; from the nature of that covenant, viz. that there should not be another deluge, chap. ix. 11.; typical of the wrath of God against the elect, Isa. liv. 9, 10. confirmed by the rainbow about the throne, Rev. iv. 3. Wherefore, since in the covenant of royalty, by which the covenant of grace is typified in our text, and in other covenants typical thereof, the parties with whom they were made stood as heads, public persons and representatives of their seed, it is evident, that the covenant of grace typified by these was made with Christ as the head and representative of his spiritual seed: for whatever is attributed to any person or thing as a type, hath its accomplishment really and chiefly in the person or thing typified.

2. This appears also from his being the last Adam, as he is called in the second text; the reason of which must be taken, not from the nature common to the first and last Adam, for all mankind partake of that; but from their common office of federal headship and representation, in the

respective covenants touching man's eternal happiness, which is peculiar unto Adam and the man Christ. Accordingly Adam is called 'the first man,' and Christ 'the second man,' 1 Cor. xv. 47. But Christ is no otherwise the second man, than he is the second federal head or representative in the second covenant, as Adam was the first federal head and representative in the first. Wherefore, as the first covenant was made with Adam, as the head and representative of all mankind, the second covenant was made with Christ, as the head and representative of all the elect.

3. The promises of the covenant were made to Christ, as the second Adam, head and representative of the elect, Gal. iii. 16. 'Unto Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith,—And to thy seed, which is Christ.' I own that here is meant Christ mystical, the head and members: To them the promises are made, but primarily to the head, secondarily to the members in him; even as the promise of life was made in the first covenant to Adam, and to all his natural seed in him. And so the promise plainly stands, Isa. liii. 10, 11. 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities.' Thus the covenant is said to be made with the house of Israel, the spiritual Israel, yet is directed, not to them, but to another person, Heb. viii. 10.; the reason of which plainly appears in the promises being made to Christ, as their head and representative. Now, if the promises being made to Christ, as the head and representative of the elect, the covenant was made with him as such; for it is the covenant to which the promises belong, Eph. ii. 12.; and he to whom they were primarily made, was no doubt the party contractor.

4. This federal headship of Christ, and his representing of the elect in the covenant of grace, is evident from his suretyship in that covenant, whereby he became Surety for them, Heb. vii. 22. Now, he was Surety for them in the way of satisfaction for their debt, and the punishment due to them; and that as for persons utterly unable to answer for themselves, so that he took the whole upon himself. Now, such a surety is a true representative of the parties he is Surety for,

one person with them in the eye of the law. Hence not only is Christ said to have been 'made sin for us,' 2 Cor. v. 21. to have had 'our sins laid upon him,' Isa. liii. 6. to have 'died in our room and stead,' 1 Tim. ii. 6. Rom. v. 6; but also we are said to have been 'crucified with him,' Gal. ii. 20.; to be 'made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21.; yea, to 'be raised up' and glorified 'in him,' Eph. ii. 6.; and to be 'made alive in him,' as we 'died in Adam,' 1 Cor. xv. 22: All which necessarily requires this headship and representation of his in the covenant.

5. Christ bears the name of the elect, being called by their name, even as they are by his; a plain evidence of their being one in the eye of the law; and God treating with Christ as their representative in the covenant. The elect are called *Israel*, viz: the spiritual Israel, Rom. ix. 6; and so is our Lord Jesus Christ, Isa. xlix. 3. Heb. 'Thou art my servant: Israel, in whom I will glorify myself.' This is plainly meant of Christ, ver. 6; and the sense is, Thou art Israel representative, in whom I will glorify myself, as I was dishonoured by Israel, the collective body of the elect. And this may give light into that passage, Psal. xxiv. 6. compare ver. 7. &c. Thus the first man was called *Adam*, or *man*, as being the head and representative of all mankind, the person in whom God treated with the whole kind. Accordingly the elect are comprehended under the name of *Christ*, Gal. iii. 16. Col. i. 24; as all men are under the name of *Adam*, Psal. xxxi. 5. 11: 'Verily every man (*Heb.* all Adam) is vanity.'

Secondly, I come to shew why the second covenant was made with Christ as a representative, the last Adam.

1: That infinite love might have an early vent, even from eternity. God's eternal love to his elect vented itself in the covenant of grace, which is an everlasting or eternal covenant, Heb. xiii. 20. Hence we find that covenant and that love of the same eternal date, Isa. lv. 3. 'I will make with you an everlasting covenant, *Heb.* a covenant of eternity.' Jer. xxxi. 3: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, *Heb.* a love of eternity.' But since the elect are but of yesterday, the covenant of grace behaved to be like the covenant of works, but a yesterday's covenant, a time-covenant, if it was not made with Christ as their representative; it

could not have been an eternal covenant otherwise; the promise of eternal life, which is undoubtedly a promise of that covenant, could not otherwise have been of so ancient a date, as the apostle says it was. Tit. i. 2. 'before the world began.'—And how could an eternal covenant be made with time-creatures originally, but in their eternal head and representative? Or how could an eternal covenant be made personally with them, by way of personal application to them, had it not been from eternity made with another as their head and representative?

2. Because otherwise it could not have been made a conditional covenant at all, to answer the design of it. This covenant took place on the breach of the first covenant; and it is a covenant of life, Mal. ii. 5. life to dead sinners; *the last Adam being made a quickening spirit*. It was the great design of it, that dead sinners might have life, Tit. i. 2. Now, in order to this, a holy just God stood upon conditions, without the performing of which that life was not to be given; and they were high conditions, Psal. xl. 6: 1 Thes. v. 10. Now, how could an effectual conditional covenant for life be made with dead sinners, otherwise than in a representative? Can dead souls perform any condition for life pleasing to God? They must have life before they can do any thing, if it were ever so small a condition. Therefore a conditional covenant for life could not be made with sinners in their own persons; especially considering that the conditions were so high for life to the sinner, that man at his best state was not able for them, far less in his sinful state. Therefore, if such a covenant was made at all, it behoved to be made with Christ as the sinner's representative, Rom. viii. 3, 4.

3. That it might be a covenant of grace indeed, and not a covenant of works, to sinners themselves. It is evident, that the design of this covenant was to exalt free grace, and that it is framed so as to be a covenant of pure grace, and not of works to us, whatever it was to Christ, Rom. iv. 16. Eph. ii. 9. And thus indeed it is a covenant of pure grace, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as representative, being the sole undertaker for, and performer of all the conditions of the covenant in the sinner's name; whereby all ground of boasting is taken from the creature. But this is marred upon the supposition of the covenants being made with the

sinner in and by himself, standing as principal party contracting with God, undertaking and performing the conditions of the covenant for life: for how low soever these conditions undertaken and wrought by the sinner himself be, the promise of the covenant is made to them, and so, according to the scripture, it is a covenant of works, Rom. iv. 4, 5. And there is no difference between Adam's covenant and such a covenant, but in degree, which alters not the kind of covenant.

4. That the communication of righteousness and life to sinners might be in as compendious a way as the communication of death and sin was, Rom. v. 19. God having made the covenant of works with Adam as the representative of his seed, sin and death was communicated to them all from him as a deadly head, having broken the covenant. This being so, it was not agreeable to the method of divine procedure, to treat with every one to be saved, by themselves as principal parties in the new covenant for life; but with one public person for them all, who should be, by his fulfilling the covenant, a quickening head to them, from whom life might be derived unto them, in as compendious a way as death from the first Adam. This was most agreeable to the way of him whose mercy is above all his other works.

5. That it might be a sure covenant, as entered into with a sure hand, Rom. iv. 16. The first covenant was made with a mere creature as principal party and contractor; and though he was a holy and righteous creature, yet he was so unstable in performing the condition laid on him, that the promise was lost. Wherefore the fallen creature was not fit to be the principal party, or party contractor in the new covenant, wherein the promises were to be sure to poor sinners, and not to misgive. Therefore the Lord seeing them all a broken company, not to be trusted in this matter, he proposes to his own Son to be head of the new covenant, and therein to act for and in name of those given him for a seed; which being accepted, the business is made sure. God looked only to him for the performance of the condition, and the promises were made to him, and so are sure to all the seed, Gal. iii. 16. Compare Psal. lxxxix. 28. 'My mercy will I keep for him, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.'

Inf. 1. What a spring of unspeakable comfort is it to be-

lievers, to look back into eternity, before the world was made, and to behold the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, standing as the last Adam, contracting with God in the second covenant ! This may move them to cry, ‘ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! ’ Rom. xi. 33. and to shout, Grace, grace to the glorious contrivance, so full of grace. Here they may see,

1. The covenant on which their salvation depends made with a near relation of theirs, even as was the first covenant by the breaking of which they were ruined. In the one stood the first Adam for them, in the other the second Adam. Why should they look as strangers towards the covenant of grace ? The party contracting in it with God is their near kinsman, their elder brother, flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone, Eph. v. 30. ; nay, their Father, who is nearer to and has a more natural concern in them than a brother ; even the second Adam, who is their second Father ; in respect of which I think he is called ‘ the ever-lasting Father, Isa. ix. 6. compare Heb. ii. 13.

2. Their nature highly dignified ; the human nature, however corrupt it is in the multitude that partake of it, yet pure and spotless in the second Adam, fit to enter into a new covenant with an offended God. Man’s nature, as it was defiled by Adam, became so abominable, that it could never again appear before God immediately to covenant with him ; but in Christ it is so perfectly pure, that it was capable of an immediate union with the Godhead in his person, and so of covenanting with him immediately.

3. The covenant so stable and firm, that it cannot be broken, the Son of God himself being the second Adam, contractor in this covenant, The first Adam being a mere creature, not confirmed, his covenant was liable to breaking, he was capable of failing, and did fail, in the performance of the condition : and so are all the covenants made with God upon conditions to be performed by sinful men ; but in regard of the party-contractor, viz. the Lord Jesus, the covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant, it cannot be broken, Isa. lv. 3. Psal. lxxxix. 30,—33, 34.

4. The covenant well ordered in all things, as for the honour of God, so for their good in time and eternity. The second Adam, manager for them, was the Son of God, in

whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid ; he managed for his own family, his own children: so there was neither affection nor wisdom wanting in him. We may be sure then there is nothing in the covenant that their good would have required to have been kept out ; and nothing out that their case required to be in. What remains then, but that by believing they approve of the covenant, and take the comfort of it ?

Inf. 2. The covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace are not two distinct covenants, but one and the same covenant. I know some great and good men have taught otherwise, alleging the covenant of redemption to have been made with Christ, and the covenant of grace to be made with believers ; though they were far from designing or approving the ill use some have made of that principle. However, the doctrine of this church, in the Larger Catechism, is in express words, ‘ The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.’ From whence it necessarily follows, that the covenant made with Christ and with believers, or the covenant of grace and redemption, are one and the same covenant. Only, in respect of Christ, it is called *the covenant of redemption*, forasmuch as in it he engaged to pay the price of our redemption ; but in respect of us, *the covenant of grace*, forasmuch as the whole of it is of free grace to us, God himself having provided the ransom, and thereupon made over life and salvation to poor sinners, his chosen by free promise, without respect to any work of theirs to entitle them thereto*.

Inf. 3. As all mankind sinned in Adam, so believers obeyed and suffered in Christ the second Adam. For as the covenant of works being made with Adam as a public person and representative, when he broke the covenant, all sinned in him ; so the covenant of grace being made with Christ as a public person and representative, all believers obeyed and suffered in him, when he fulfilled the covenant, Rom. viii. 4. Gal. ii. 20.

Inf. 4. Believers are justified immediately by the righteousness of Christ, without any righteousness of their own

* The illustration of this point may be seen in the author’s *View of the Covenant of Grace*, under the title, *Of the party-contractor on man’s side* inf. 1. a work posterior to this discourse.

intervening, as all men are condemned from their birth upon the sin of Adam, before they have done good or evil in their own persons. So that they are righteous before God with the self-same righteousness, which was wrought by Christ in his fulfilling of this covenant; which righteousness is imputed to them, not in its effects only, so as their faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, are accepted as their evangelical righteousness, on which they are justified; but in itself. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified: and faith, repentance, and new obedience, considered as conditions performed, are works and cannot found a title to justification.

Inf. 5. The covenant of grace is absolute, and not conditional to us. For being made with Christ as representative of his seed, all the conditions of it were laid on him, and he has fulfilled the same. So what remains of the covenant to be accomplished is only the fulfilling of the promises to him and his spiritual seed; even as it would have been with the first Adam's seed, if once he had fulfilled the condition of the covenant.

Inf. 6. The way to attain to the enjoyment of all the benefits of the covenant of grace, is to unite with Christ the head of the covenant by faith. Being thus ingrafted into him, ye shall partake of all that happiness secured to mystical Christ in the everlasting covenant; even as by your becoming sons of Adam by your natural generation, ye fall under that sin and death which passeth on all by the breaking of the first covenant, Rom. v. 12.

Inf. 7. The offer of Christ made to you in the gospel, is the offer of the covenant of grace to you, and of all the benefits thereof; and the embracing of Christ is the embracing of the covenant, and the personal entering into it. The covenant of grace held forth in the gospel, is the cord of love let down from heaven to perishing sinners shipwrecked in Adam, to save them from sinking into the bottom of the gulf, and to hale them to land. It is their duty to lay hold on the covenant by faith, Isa. lvi. 4, 6. And that is done by taking hold of Christ in the free promise, believing that he is held forth to you in particular, confiding and trusting in him for your salvation from sin and wrath, upon the ground of God's faithfulness in the promise, 'Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life,' John iii. 16.

For he is given for a covenant to you, Isa. xlix. 8. and xlii. 6. So receiving him you receive the covenant, he being the head of the covenant, who performed the condition, and to whom the promises were made.

Inf. 8. The covenant of grace is a contrivance of infinite wisdom and love, worthy to be embraced by poor sinners with all joy, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. O admirable contrivance of help for a desperate case! wonderful contrivance of a covenant with them who were incapable of coming into the presence of a holy just God, or to perform the least condition for life and salvation! A new bargain for life and salvation to lost sinners, on the highest terms, made with those who were incapable to come up to the lowest terms! Wisdom found out the way, viz. by a representative: the love of the Father engaged him to make the proposal; and the love of the Son induced him to accept of it. Thus a sure covenant is made, and a firm foundation laid, on which the sinner may safely lay his whole weight, for upon it lies the weight of God's honour, Isa. xxviii. 16.

Inf. last. How sinful and dangerous must the course of those be who practically corrupt the covenant of grace, pretending to make a covenant with God, as parties contractors and undertakers, for life and salvation, instead of taking hold of God's covenant; The carnal Jews did so corrupt it, looking for life and salvation, not for the sake of the promised seed alone, but for their obedience to the ceremonial and moral law: and thus do many to this day practically corrupt it. They think the covenant of grace is a promise of life and salvation upon condition of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience to the law: whereupon they consent to these terms, and solemnly undertake to perform them, and then, upon their (fancied) performance of them, they challenge life and salvation, as having done their part. This quite overturns the nature of the covenant of grace, Rom. iv. 4. and xi. 6. The sinfulness of it is great, as overlooking Christ, the great undertaker and party contractor by the appointment of the Father; and putting themselves in his room, to act, and do, and work for themselves for life. And the danger of it must be great, as laying a foundation to bear the weight of their souls, which divine wisdom saw to be quite unable to bear it, Gal. v. 4. So the issue of such covenanting must be, that the covenanters shall lie down in sorrow. The true

way of covenanting is, to take up the covenant of grace as a free promise of life and salvation, upon condition of Christ's obedience and death performed already; to believe that promise with particular application to the sinner himself, *i. e.* that the sinner believe, that he shall have life and salvation, pardon of sin; repentance; sanctification, grace, and glory, and that upon the ground of Christ's obedience and satisfaction only, Heb. viii. 10. Thus the covenant is held out, as a free and absolute promise, to sinners indefinitely, like a rope to a company of drowning men; that whoever believes it may by it be drawn forth out of the waters. We proceed to consider;

THIRDLY, The party contracted and undertaken for in this covenant. And as the party-contractor was a representative; so the party-contracted for was represented by him. And that these two, the represented and the contracted for, are of equal latitude, is plain from the nature of the thing: for those whom one represents in a covenant, he contracts for in that covenant; and those for whom one contracts in a covenant, made with him as a representative, they are represented by him in that covenant. It is evident also from the relation betwixt the two Adams, the former being a type of the latter: In the first covenant, those whom Adam, contracted for, he represented; and those whom he represented, he contracted for: therefore those whom the second Adam contracted for he represented; and whom he represented, he contracted for.

Now, the party represented and contracted for in the covenant of grace by our Lord Jesus Christ, was the elect of mankind; a certain number of the posterity of Adam chosen from eternity to everlasting life, Heb. ii. 11, 12, 13. In their person it was that he stood in making this bargain with his Father, in their name it was that he acted when he struck hands with the Father, as a surety to obey the law, and satisfy justice. And that these only could be so represented by him in this covenant, as being the objects of election, is evident from the last discourse, on the doctrine of election.

It will be proper, therefore, to shew how the elect were considered in this covenant and federal representation. They come under a threefold consideration, as sinners, as impotent sinners, and as objects of the divine love.

I: As sinners ruined in Adam, lost sheep of the house of

Israel, Matth. xv. 24. In the first covenant God put all the flock of mankind under the hand of one shepherd, Adam. But he lost all the flock, and was never able to recover them again. God from all eternity had put a secret mark on some of them, whereby he distinguished them from the rest, 2 Tim. ii. 19. He saw them among the rest, gone from their pasture, wandering like poor waifs and strays, a prey to every devourer. And he proposeth a new covenant, whereby they might be put under the hand of Christ as their shepherd, to be by him sought out and brought back. And this our Lord Jesus accepted; though he well knew what it would cost him to save the lost sheep.

2. As impotent, and utterly unable to help themselves, in whole or in part, Rom. v: 6. They were debtors, and utterly unable to pay one farthing of their debt; and criminals, and quite unable to bear their own punishment to the satisfaction of justice. Had it lain on them to have paid the debt or borne the punishment; they behoved for ever to have sunk under the load. Then said the Son of God, 'I can not see them perish; Father I put myself in their room, I will answer for them; I will pay their debt, and bear their punishment; I will be the debtor and criminal in law reckoning, as representing the criminals and debtors.' The representation is sustained, the payment of all is laid on him, and is looked for from no other hand, in whole or in part, either by the one or other party contracting, Isa. lxi. 2. Psal. lxi. 4. Yet,

3. As objects of eternal love; sovereign and free, given to Christ by his Father. The Father loved them, John xvii. 23. and therefore gave them to Christ; ver 6. The Son loved them, Eph. v. 2. and accepts of the gift; and represents them in the covenant; as a Father does his children, Isa. lx. 6. with Heb. ii: 13. This absolutely free-love, and mere good pleasure, was the reason why they, and not others in the same condemnation by the breach of the first covenant, were represented by Christ in the second covenant; why their names were put in the eternal contract, when the names of others were left out, Luke x. 21. They were his Father's choice and his choice; and so he became their representative*.

* Some proper inferences relative to this part of the subject may be seen in the treatise on the covenant of grace, under the title, *Of the party contracted and undertaken for.*

II. The second general head is to consider the parts of this covenant. These are the things agreed upon betwixt God and Christ, as the second Adam, and representative of the elect in the covenant: They may be taken up in two things, the condition of the covenant, and the promises thereof. I shall consider each distinctly.

FIRST, The condition of the covenant. The condition of a covenant or bargain is that part of it, upon the performance of which one's right to the benefit promised is founded, his plea for it is established, as becoming due to him for that his performance, according to the agreement betwixt the parties. For instance, the paying of such a sum of money, for such a commodity, according to the agreement of the parties bargaining, is the condition of a covenant of commerce, sale, or traffic; and the working of such a piece of work, or doing of such a deed, for such a reward, agreed upon by the parties, is the condition of a covenant of service or hire.

There is also what is called a condition of connection or order in a covenant, whereby one thing necessarily goes before another in the order of a covenant, without being the ground on which one's right and title to that other thing is founded. As in the former instances, the buyer's receiving of the commodity, and the hireling's receiving of the reward, covenanted or bargained for, must needs go before the possession or enjoyment of them: but it is evident, that receiving is not the thing on which the buyers right and title to the reward is founded: therefore, though it may be called a condition of connection in the respective covenants, yet it cannot in any propriety of speech be called the condition of these covenants.

Thus, in the order of the covenant of grace, the having of the Spirit must go before faith, faith before justification, justification before sanctification, and holiness before heaven's happiness. These may be called conditions in the covenant of grace, viz. conditions of certain connection; and belong to the established order of the promises of the covenant, which are contradistinguished to the condition of the covenant. But such conditions can in no proper sense be called the condition or conditions of the covenant.

This being premised, we say, that the condition of the covenant of grace, properly so called, is Christ's fulfilling of

all righteousness, owing unto God by the elect, in virtue of the covenant of works, and that as the last Adam, their head and representative. And here I shall,

1. Evince this to be the condition of the covenant.

2. Explain and unfold that righteousness, the fulfilling whereof was made the condition of the covenant.

FIRST, I am to evince that this is the condition of the covenant of grace. This will appear, if ye consider,

1. Christ's fulfilling all righteousness in the second Adam, is what the Father proposed as the terms of the elect's salvation unto Christ, and upon which he founded his promise of eternal life to them; and not any work or deed of theirs, Isa. liii. 10, 11. And says Christ, *This cup is the new testament in my blood*; as if he had said, All the promises of the covenant were written with my blood, it was the condition of them which procured them, and without which ye had never got them. And accordingly this is what Christ, as the second Adam, did from eternity consent to, undertake, and bind himself for, and in time did perform, Matth. iii. 15, 'It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,' as it becomes a person of honour and credit to fulfil his bargain. Luke xiv. 26. 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?' viz. as one ought to perform the condition of a covenant or bargain he has agreed to.

Obiect. But the elects believing, holiness, and good works, were also fixed as terms of their salvation: and Christ undertook also that they should believe, &c.

Ans. Then at that rate Christ performed the chief part of the condition of the covenant, and took it wholly on himself; but they perform another part of the condition, for which he became their cautioner. Thus the condition of the covenant of grace is divided betwixt Christ and the impotent beggarly creature: and so must the glory of their salvation be; for whosoever works part of the work, or pays a part of the price, without question so much of the reward and purchase is due to him. But none of the glory of it is due to us, 1. Cor. i. 31. Zech. vi. 13. Rom. iv. 4, 5.; and therefore no part of the condition is performed by us. I own these things are secured in the covenant; but they are secured not in the conditional part of the covenant, but in the promissory part of it, Heb. viii. 10.

2. This, and nothing done by the sinner himself, is that

upon which a sinner's right to eternal life is founded: upon nothing else can he safely found his plea before the Lord for life and salvation. And a sinner thoroughly convinced will find it so, Rom. iii. 24, 25. Eph. i. 7. Phil. iii. 9. The sinner standing trembling in the court of conscience, by faith gets under the covert of the Mediator's righteousness, and dare oppose nothing to the sentence of the law, but Christ's fulfilling all righteousness, giving up all other pleas for life and salvation. And believing is the pleading itself upon that ground, not the ground of the plea. It saith, 'My Lord and my God,' in the promise, upon the ground of Christ's fulfilling all righteousness only, as the condition of the covenant.

3. This is that alone by which the salvation of sinners becomes due or a debt. Now, it is not a debt to them; therefore they fulfil no part of the condition; but unto Christ; therefore he performed the proper condition of the covenant; for he who fulfils the condition of a covenant, the reward is of debt to him, Rom. iv. 4, 5. compare 1 John ii. 1. 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. We may see this even in the first Adam's covenant, the condition whereof was perfect active obedience. Which if it had been fulfilled by Adam, eternal life to him and his would thereupon have become due or a debt to him. And hence it is, that Christ's fulfilling all righteousness is the believer's only plea for life and salvation: even as in case Adam had performed the condition of his covenant, the plea of all his posterity for life would have been founded on that performance solely, as being the only obedience that was the condition of that covenant; their personal obedience, at least after the performance of the former, being the accomplishment of the promise of the covenant, not of the condition. And so they would have had life, not for any personal deed or work of theirs, but freely, for the obedience of the first Adam, to which he did graciously make the promise of life in the first covenant.

4. *Lastly,* The covenant of grace doth so exclude our boasting as the covenant of works did not, Rom. iii. 27. But if any deed or work of our own be the condition of the covenant of grace in whole or in part, our boasting is not excluded; for life and salvation is of or by the fulfilling of the condition of the covenant, Rom. iv. 4. and so far as

life and salvation is of or by any work of ours, there is room for our boasting, Eph. ii. 9. even as in the covenant of works, wherein life was by works, not in the way of proper merit, but only by virtue of paction or covenant *.

SECONDLY, I shall explain and unfold that righteousness, the fulfilling of which was the condition of the covenant of works. And that we may have the more distinct view of it, I shall shew,

1. The parts of that righteousness.

2. The character which, upon his Father's call, the Lord Jesus took upon himself, in the covenant, in order to his accepting and performing the condition of the covenant for his people.

First, I am to shew the parts of that righteousness, the fulfilling whereof was made the condition of the covenant. And forasmuch as Christ undertook the performing of that condition in the room and stead of his spiritual seed, the debt of righteousness was and must be stated from the law or broken covenant of works, which they were lying under. For the law or covenant of works was so far from being neglected in the new bargain, that whatever it had to charge upon or demand of the elect for life and salvation, was summed up and set down in the new covenant, and the full and complete payment thereof made the condition of that covenant, Isa. xlii. 21. Psal. lxxix. 4. This may from thence be summed up in these three things, holiness of nature, righteousness of life, and satisfaction for sin, which make the whole of the condition of the covenant of grace, the price of the redemption of an elect world, which Christ the second Adam undertook from eternity, to accomplish in himself, in their name, room, and stead.

1. Holiness of nature. That the law required as a term of enjoying eternal life, condemning original sin and corruption of nature as well as of life, saying, 'Thou shalt not covet.' For God being essentially and necessarily holy, nothing can be so contrary to him as an unholy nature. But Christ's spiritual seed were as unable to reach this holiness of nature, as any of their brethren of Adam's family; their nature was corrupt, and it was quite beyond their power to purify it, Prov. xx. 9. Wherefore, that the law

* Proper inferences from this point may be seen in the treatise on the covenant of grace, under the title, *Of the conditionary part of the covenant.*

might be satisfied in this point; it was settled as a condition of the covenant, That the second Adam representing them should be a man of a perfectly holy, pure, and untainted nature, fully answering for them that holiness and perfection of nature required by the law. It consists of two articles,

(1.) That he as the second Adam should be conceived and born holy, for and instead of his spiritual seed, conceived and born in sin.

(2.) That he should inviolably retain the holiness of nature for them, and in their name *.

2. Righteousness of life. This also the law required as one of the terms of life. The law given to Adam and all his seed, which they were obliged to obey in all points, by the tie of natural duty, and by covenant for life, was never fulfilled by them; and Christ's spiritual seed as well as others fell short of it, Rom. iii. 23. The first Adam began the course of obedience, but he quickly fell off from it, and all his natural seed in him. But the justice of God, and the honour of his law, could not suffer the reward, the prize, the crown of eternal life, to be bestowed without running of the race. The elect having no ability for running that race, it was made a condition of the second covenant, that Christ as a public person, their representative, should begin and perfect the course of obedience to the law in righteousness of life. This may be taken up in these three articles.

(1.) That he, as the second Adam, should, in the name of those represented by him, obey the whole law.

(2.) That every part of that obedience of his should be screwed up to the highest pitch and degree.

(3.) That all this should be continued to the end, without the least failure in one jot of parts or degrees of obedience †.

3. Satisfaction for sin, Isa. liii. 10. The former two were in the condition of Adam's covenant; but this was not: for there being no sin, no satisfaction was due. But the new covenant, supposing the first to be broken, behoved to be settled on the condition of a satisfaction, in virtue of the justice of God, and of his truth, who had annexed a

* See the illustration of these two articles, *ubi supra*, under the title, *Holiness of Nature*.

† See *ubi supra*, under the title, *Righteousness of Life*.

penalty to the breach of the covenant of works. And in this part of the condition of the covenant the following articles were settled.

(1.) That Christ, as a public person should satisfy for all comprehended in the covenant, all and every one of his spiritual seed, Isa. liii. 6.

(2.) That he should satisfy for them, by suffering for them, and in their name and stead, Heb. ix. 22.

(3.) That he should by suffering satisfy for them fully and compleatly, that the law might have no need to come back on them for any part of the satisfaction due.

(4.) That he should suffer the same punishment that they should have suffered in virtue of the penalty of the broken covenant of works, from which this debt of satisfaction was stated; and that was death in its full latitude and extent.

(5.) That he should suffer all this voluntarily, submissively, and out of regard to the wronged honour of God, willingly repairing it*.

Secondly, I shall shew the character which, upon his Father's call, our Lord took upon himself, in the covenant, in order to his accepting and performing the condition of the covenant for his people, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, hath a manifold relation to the covenant, as he is called the covenant itself: but here I meddle only with those relations to it which concerned the condition; and shall take them up in this threefold character, their kinsman Redeemer in the covenant, the Surety of the covenant, and the Priest thereof.

(1.) Christ became the kinsman Redeemer in the covenant, Job xix. 25. And there were four things which the kinsman Redeemer was to do for his kinsman, which he was not able to do for himself; all which Christ took upon him in the conditional part of the covenant.

(1.) He was to marry the widow of the deceased kinsman, to raise up seed to his brother, Ruth iii. 9. compared with Ezek. xvi. 8. So our kinsman Redeemer undertook in this covenant to marry the widow, to take on man's nature in the fulness of time, marrying it to himself in a personal union with the divine nature.

(2.) He was to redeem the mortgaged inheritance of his poor kinsman, Lev. xxv. 25. Heaven and eternal life is the

* See *ubi supra*, title, *Satisfaction for Sin*.

mortgaged inheritance. Our kinsman Redeemer took the burden of the redemption on himself, and agreed to pay the price of the purchase:

(3.) He was to redeem his poor kinsman, brought into bondage, paying his ransom, Lev. xxv. 47. Sinners had lost their freedom, and became slaves to sin and Satan. Our kinsman Redeemer agreed to give himself for them; for purchasing of their liberty, 1 Tim. ii. 3, 6.

(4.) He was to avenge the blood of his slain kinsman on the slayer, Deut. xix. 12. All mankind was slain, and the elect of God among the rest. Our kinsman Redeemer undertook the avenging of their blood on Sin and Satan*.

2. Christ became the Surety of the Covenant. This the scripture expressly teacheth, Heb. vii. 22. What suretyship is among men; many have known to their cost, to the ruin of themselves and their families. It is a man's taking on himself the person of another in law, and binding and obliging himself to answer for what can be legally demanded of that other person. Against rash undertaking of this Solomon cautioneth, Prov. xi. 15. It is twofold; suretyship by way of satisfaction for debt contracted; (Prov. xxi. 26), by the party whom one is surety for; and suretyship by way of caution for some deed to be performed by the party for whom one is surety, Prov. xx. 16. 'Take his garment that is surety for a stranger; and take a pledge of him for a strange woman;' that is, for they will not perform, and the cautioner will be left in the lurch. Here I shall enquire, for whom and for what Christ became Surety in the covenant:

1st, For whom Christ became Surety in the covenant. Possibly it may be safely said, that Christ became God's Surety to us in the covenant, taking on himself to see all the promises of the covenant performed to the seed, even to unbelievers. For in the case of one unknown to us, though in himself most faithful; a surety may be necessary, especially if the party be of a jealous and suspicious temper. It is certain that God's promises are, in respect of his infallible veracity; most sure and firm, and cannot miss to be performed: but sinners are slow to believe, Luke xxiv. 25. And if Christ be Surety for God unto us, it is for the same end that God has given his oath in the case, Heb. vi. 17, 18.

But I doubt if the scripture calls Jesus Christ a Surety in

* *Vide ubi supra, tit. Christ the kinsman Redeemer in the covenant.*

that stand. In Heb. vii. 22. the only text wherein Christ is expressly called a Surety, it is undeniable that the suretyship respects his priestly office, ver. 20. with 22. and therefore his suretyship for us to God: whereas his suretyship for God to us cannot relate to his priestly office, but to his kingly office, in respect of which all power is given to him in heaven and earth; and consequently a power to see that all the promises be performed to his people. In two other texts only, we read of suretyship relating to the case between God and a soul; and in both the suretyship is not to, but for the soul, viz. Psal. cxix. 122. 'Be surety for thy servant for good,' Job xvii. 3: 'Put me in a surety with thee.' The original expression is the same in the latter text as in the former. Whatever is of this, one thing is plain, that it doth not belong to the condition of the covenant, but to the promises of it; and therefore lies not here before us.

But Christ became our Surety to God in the covenant. Thus was he most properly, if not the only, Surety of the covenant. The covenant of grace was made with the spiritual seed in Christ, as their head and representative, and their Surety taking burden for them upon himself, Psal. lxxix. 19.

2dly, For what he became surety. This will appear by considering the nature of his suretyship. I spoke before of two kinds of suretyship. It was the first, the heaviest of the two, that our Lord undertook, viz. suretyship in the way of satisfaction for debt contracted, wherein the burden was wholly devolved on himself, and he was to be the sole actor and sufferer. The debt of the elect world was, by God's eternal foreknowledge, stated from the broken covenant of works, in the whole latitude of its demands on them: and Christ became surety for it, and so did strike hands with his Father from eternity, to pay it completely. And,

(1). He became Surety for their debt of punishment, which they as sinners were liable in *payment* of, as the original phrase is, 2 Thess. i. 9. That was the debt owing to the divine justice for all and every one of their breaches of the holy law, whether original or actual. The demand of their sins was an infinite punishment, as being committed against an infinite God. They were liable to bear the pains

of death in the full latitude of it; to suffer the force of revenging wrath, to the full satisfaction of infinite justice, and reparation of God's honour. This debt of theirs, Christ became Surety for, engaging his life for their life, which was lost in law; where there was not the least hope of escape, Psal. xl. 6, 7. with John x. 18. In this suretyship there was an exchange of persons in law, which sovereign grace did admit, when it might have been insisted, that the souls that sinned should die. And in virtue thereof Christ himself became debtor in law, bound to pay that debt which he contracted not, Psal. lxxix. 4. And there was a double translation made on Christ in the covenant, from the elect, with his own consent, as a foundation in law and justice for exacting the elect's debt of him.

[1.] Their guilt was transferred on him, Isa. liii. 6. All the sins of all the elect were at once imputed to him, and so became his, as his righteousness became ours, viz. in law-reckoning, 2 Cor. v. 21. So that though he was absolutely without sin inherent, he was not without sin imputed to him, till in his resurrection he got up the discharge, Heb. ix. ult. having done them away, and cleared the debt by his death.

[2.] The curse due to them for their sins was transferred on him, Gal. iii. 13. The sentence of the law binding them over to bear the revenging wrath of God for all their sins, till justice should be satisfied, was with his own consent laid upon him. And in virtue hereof his blessed body was hanged on a tree, and the sentence of the broken law, Gen. ii. 17. was executed on that body and holy soul, Gal. iii. 13.

O heavy, yet happy exchange! heavy for Christ the Surety, but happy for poor sinners. Here is what is got on either hand by the exchange of the persons of Christ and his redeemed ones. All the sins of the redeemed are charged on Christ, for the satisfaction of justice by suffering for them: and all Christ's righteousness, for life and salvation, is reckoned on their score, 2 Cor. v. 21. The curse of the law comes on him for their sake: and the blessing of the gospel comes on them for his sake, Gal. iii. 13, 14.

(2.) He became Surety for their debt of duty and obedience, Matth. iii. 15. The law as a covenant of works, though it was broken by sinners, who thereby had incurred

the penalty, neither lost its right, nor ceased to exact the obedience which at first it required of man, as the condition of life. The sinner was still bound to perfect obedience, and on no less or lower terms could have eternal life, Luke x. 28. The paying of the debt of punishment might satisfy as to the penalty of the bond: but there is yet more behind for him who will meddle in the affairs of the broken company. How shall the principal sum contained in the original contract be paid, the debt of obedience to the law for life and salvation? The honour of God could not allow the quitting of it: and they were absolutely unable to pay one mite of it, that was current in heaven, Rom. v. 6. Eph. ii. 1. They were quite as incapable for the doing part, as the suffering part. So Christ became Surety for this debt of theirs too, the debt of obedience to the law as a covenant, which was and is the only obedience for life and salvation to the sons of men. Whatever the law can demand of them in this kind, holiness of nature or righteousness of life, he strikes hands for the payment of it, Psal. xl. 7, 8.

And here also there was an exchange of persons in law, as to Christ and the elect, he sustaining their person in the eye of the law, sisting himself for them to answer for every item of this debt, as their Surety. And in virtue thereof he became the law's debtor for that obedience which was owing to it by the elect: which debt he owned to be lying upon him by his circumcision, Luke ii. 21, compared with Gal. v. 3 *.

(3.) Christ became the Priest of the covenant, Heb. vii. 20, 21, 22, 28. He undertook that office, and put on that character, at his Father's call, Heb. v. 4, 5, 6, to the end that he might perform the condition of the covenant. A priest is a public person, who deals with an offended God, in the name of a guilty company, for reconciliation, by sacrifice which he offereth to God upon an altar, Heb. v. 1. being thereto called of God, that he may be accepted. So a priest speaks a relation to an altar, an altar to a sacrifice, and a sacrifice to sin. Here I shall inquire, for whom Christ became a Priest, and what need there was of his becoming a Priest in this covenant.

* *Vide ubi supra, tit. Christ the Surety of the Covenant.*

1st, For whom he became a Priest. He became a Priest for sinners, Heb. viii. 1. Where there is no sin, there is no need of a priesthood: So Christ's priesthood speaks men to be guilty creatures, needing an atonement and reconciliation. And he became a Priest for those sinners whose names were in the covenant, and them only, that is, for the elect, whose names are written in heaven: for being the Priest of the covenant, he must be their Priest, and theirs only, who were comprehended in the covenant. In a word, he became the Priest of the spiritual Israel in the covenant, that Israel for whose behoof the covenant was made *.

2dly, What need was there of Christ's becoming a Priest in this covenant. The necessity of it will appear in these four things,

(1.) They were sinners, and there could not be a new covenant made without provision for removing of their sin; and that required a priest, and one that was able to remove sin, and repair the injured honour of God. And such a one was Christ.

(2.) Sin could not be removed, without a sacrifice of sufficient value, which they were not able to afford. The new covenant was a covenant by sacrifice, Psal. l. 5. and it could not be obtained without sacrifice; it behoved necessarily to be written in blood, Heb. ix. 22. Christ becoming a priest, gave himself a sacrifice, for establishing of the covenant, Eph. v. 2. and so it is the New Testament in his blood, shed for the remission of the sins of many.

(3.) No sacrifice could be accepted, but on such an altar as should sanctify the gift to the effect of the removing of sin. And who could furnish that but the Son of God himself, whose divine nature was the altar, from whence the sacrifice of the human nature derived its value and efficacy, as infinite, Heb. ix. 14.

(4.) There behoved to be a priest to offer this sacrifice, this valuable sacrifice unto God upon that altar: else there could have been no sacrifice to be accepted, and so no removal of sin, and so no new covenant. And who could that be but the Son of God only? Since himself was the sacrifice, and himself the altar, he himself alone could be the Priest †.

Inf. From all that has been said on the head of the condi-

* See this clearly proved afterwards in the discourse on Christ's priestly office.

† *Vide ubi supra, tit. Christ the Priest of the Covenant.*

plea of the covenant, ye see the price of sinners salvation, the ransom of souls, the only valuable plea that a sinner can have for mercy, namely, the condition of the covenant performed by the Mediator. Let it be the great concern of your life, to be interested in it in a saving manner, as reckoned of God to have been performed for you. If it be not reckoned on your account, what will it avail you for life and salvation? Be concerned then for the imputation of that righteousness unto you. It is offered in the gospel unto you, that the holiness of Christ's nature, the righteousness of his life, and the satisfaction of his death, shall be yours, yours freely, as a free gift of righteousness, believe it, and lay your souls weight on it by faith, and it shall be imputed to you.

SECONDLY, We proceed now to consider the second part of the covenant of grace, viz. the promise. This covenant is a proper covenant: and in it there is a promissory part, answering to the conditional part which we have now explained. And it is God's part of the covenant, as the other was the Mediator's part; and is that which our text, *I have made a covenant with my chosen*, doth principally and expressly bear; compare ver. 4. 'Thy seed will I establish for ever.' The promise of the covenant is the bond of promise, whereby God has obliged himself to give the benefits specified in the covenant, and to make them forthcoming, upon the consideration of the performance of the condition. And forasmuch as the condition performed by Christ was strictly meritorious of the benefits promised, the promise is firm and binding, not only in respect of the truth and faithfulness of God, Tit. i. 2.; but also in respect of his justice, 2 Tim. iv. 8. which requires the Mediator's obedience to be rewarded according to the promise made in the covenant.

Of what weight and importance the promissory part of the covenant is, will appear by these considerations.

1. The covenant of grace hath its name from this part of it, Eph. ii. 12. It is called, 'covenants of promise.'
2. The covenant itself is by the Holy Ghost described as a cluster of free promises of grace and glory to poor sinners, without any mention of any condition, Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12.
3. The promises of the covenant are the purchase of Christ's blood, the fruit of his fulfilling all righteousness in his birth, life, and death.

4. The great design and end of the covenant is accomplished in the performance of the promissory part of the covenant; and that is the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners, Rev. x. 7.

5. The happiness and comfort of all God's elect, for time and eternity, depends on the promises of the covenant, Tit. i. 2.

6. The glory of the man Christ, as Mediator of the covenant depends on the promise of the covenant.

7. God has sworn the promise of the covenant, Psal. lxxxix. 8, Heb. vi. 17. *

For clearing of this weighty point, we shall consider the promises of the covenant in general, and then take a more particular view of them,

FIRST, I am to shew what are the promises of the covenant of grace in general. They are promises made by God himself in that covenant, upon the consideration of Christ's fulfilling the condition of the covenant, as the onerous cause thereof, whereby he has secured all happiness to the elect, after Adam and his children had lost it by the breach of the first covenant, and hath also secured all means leading thereunto. These promises, in respect of the parties on whom they have their direct and immediate effect, are of two sorts.

1. Some of them have their direct and immediate effect on Christ himself, the head of the covenant, who in his own person performed the condition of it; such as the promises of assistance in his work, of a numerous offspring to be given him, and a name above every name, as the reward of his work, Heb. xii. 2.

2. Some of them have their direct and immediate effect on Christ's spiritual seed and members, comprehended with him in the same covenant; such as the promises of the new heart, regeneration, cleansing from the defilement of sin, &c.

SECONDLY, To whom the promises are made. We may take up this point in these two things.

First, The promises of the first sort, viz. those that have their direct and immediate effect on the person of Christ, were made to Christ himself, Isa. xlix. 7. And they were

* See these seven particulars illustrated, *ubi supra*, tit. The promissory part of the covenant.

made to him as head of the covenant, the second Adam, the representative of his spiritual seed.

Secondly, The promises of the second sort, viz. those that have their direct and immediate effect on Christ's spiritual seed, the elect, are made to Christ primarily, and to the seed secondarily. They are made to both, but first to the head, then to the members through him.

1. They are primarily and chiefly made to Christ. Though they have their immediate effect on the elect, they are made immediately and chiefly to him. This appears by several documents from the word of God.

1st. The express testimony of the apostle, Gal. iii. 16. 'Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made, — and to thy seed, which is Christ.'

2dly, Christ is by the covenant constituted heir of all things, Psal. lxxxix. 27. Heb. i. 2. And that must needs be in virtue of the promise of the covenant, which he purchased by his fulfilling of the covenant.

3dly, As God promised life in the covenant of works to Adam's children, upon condition of his perfect obedience, which is evident from death coming on them by his disobedience; so he hath promised life in the covenant of grace to Christ's spiritual seed, upon condition of his obedience.

4thly, All the promises that have their direct and immediate effect on the elect, are a part of the reward made over to Jesus Christ in the covenant, Heb. xii. 2. compared with Isa. liii. 10. They are all the price of blood to him, the purchase of his obedience and death, and therefore called *the new testament in his blood*.

This is a point of great weight, and serves both to inform our minds and direct our practice. For hence may fairly be inferred,

(1.) That the promises are not made to the believer's good works, but to Christ's works, and to the working believer in and through him, Rom. iv. 4. They are absolutely free to the believer, and not of debt to him, and therefore are not made to his works.

*(2.) That the first grace whereby the dead elect are quickened, and made to believe, and unite with Christ, is conveyed to them in the way and sure tenor of a promise, as well as the grace that follows faith, Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

(3.) The way to be personally and savingly interested in

the promises of the covenant for time and eternity is to embrace Christ by faith, and thereby unite with him, 2 Cor. i. 20:

(4.) When through deadness and darkness of Spirit, or some conscience wasting guilt, the faith of the promise is failed in you, and ye cannot fasten your hold upon it again, because you see no good in yourselves, embrace Christ again, and the promise in him, notwithstanding of all your first unworthiness and guilt, and stand not off from the promise till you be in better case, Psal. lxxv. 3:

(5.) The true way to plead the promise is, to plead them through Jesus Christ, to plead the accomplishment of them to ourselves for his sake, to come to God in the name of Christ, and to crave the fulfilling of the promises, John xiii 23, 24:

(6.) *Lastly*, This may confirm and strengthen the faith of believers as to the accomplishment of the promises to them:

2: These promises are made to the elect, Christ's seed, secondarily, in and through Christ, 2 Tim. i. 9. As he has the chief and fundamental interest in them, so they have a derived interest in them through him, in respect of their legal and mystical union with him*:

Let us therefore take heed to ourselves, lest standing off from the free promise of life in Christ, we go about to seek our salvation another way. Let us be denied to all confidence in our own works, as we would not thrust ourselves into the room of Christ, and so he become of no effect to us.

[The author next proceeds to take a particular view of the promises of the covenant of grace, which he treats of as peculiar to Christ, and as common to his spiritual seed; for all which we must refer the reader to his *View of the Covenant of Grace*, under the titles, *Of the promises peculiar to Christ*, and, *Of the promise of eternal life to the elect, considered in three periods*; where they are handled more largely than in this work.]

III. The next general head is, to consider the administration of the covenant of grace. Since this covenant is that which the salvation of the whole spiritual seed depends on, and according to it all the dispensations of God towards them, for carrying on and completing that love design, &c

* See all the foregoing particulars amplified, *ubi supra*, under the title last referred to.

regulated; and since it was withal a compact entered into betwixt the Father and the Son before the world began, and so in itself a great secret, Psal. xxv. 14.; it is necessary that there be an administration of it, whereby it may be rendered effectual, for the behoof of those in whose favour it was entered into. Wherefore the administration of it was devolved on Christ, the second Adam: and he hath it as one of his prerogatives, by the covenant itself, made over to him in the promissory part of the covenant, particularly by the promise of a glorious reward of his work in fulfilling the condition, John v. 27. It was for this cause the last Adam was made a quickening spirit, as saith our second text. And so he is 'given for a covenant of the people,' Isa. xlix. 8.; which imports the constituting him Administrator of the covenant; whereby the people, any people, Jews or Gentiles; may become God's people, and receive all the benefits of that covenant-relation to God.

Now, that Christ is, by the authority of heaven, constituted or made the covenant, imports these two things.

1. He is constituted and settled, by the authority of his Father, Administrator of the covenant. As he had the burden of purchasing the promised benefits, so he has the honour of distributing them, according to the measures laid down in the eternal purpose of God, with respect to the conferring of these benefits: None of the benefits of the covenant are to be had; but out of his hand: he received them from his Father, and sinners must receive them from him. That this is the meaning of this phrase, is evident from the following words, declaring the end of his being given for a covenant of the people: 'To establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages,' ver. 9. compare chap. xlii. 6, 7. 'That thou mayst say to the prisoners, Go forth.'

2. The whole of the covenant is in him. An administrator of one's goods must have them in his custody; he must have a power over them, as Joseph, who was to furnish the people corn, had all the granaries of Egypt at his command. Our Lord Jesus is such an Administrator of the covenant, as has the whole of the covenant in himself: so that he who has Christ has the covenant; and he that has not Christ has no saving part or lot in it.

For opening of the administration of the covenant devolv-

ed on Christ, we shall consider these three things, the objects, the ends, and the nature of this administration.

FIRST, who are the objects of this his administration, the parties to whom he is impowered, by commission from his Father, to administer the covenant. The elect only were the parties represented by the second Adam; and to them only is the administration of the covenant effectual to their salvation. But mankind-sinners indefinitely are the objects of the administration. The extent of it is not founded on election, but on the sufficiency of Christ's obedience and death for the salvation of all; nor is it regulated by election, but by the fulness of power in heaven and earth given to Christ as the reward of his work, his obedience even unto death.

To confirm this truth, which is glad tidings for all sinners of Adam's race, hearing that Christ is empowered by commission to give them, and every one of them the covenant, and all the benefits of it, to their eternal salvation, the following things may be considered.

1. The grant made of Christ by the Father, as the ordinance of God for the salvation of lost sinners of mankind. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, many of them were bitten by fiery serpents: in that case God instituted an ordinance for their cure, viz. a brazen serpent lifted up on a pole. And he made a grant of it to whosoever would use it for that purpose of healing, for which it was appointed of him, by looking to it, without accepting any that needed healing, Numb. xxi. 28. So all mankind being bitten by the old serpent the devil, and sin as his deadly poison left in them; God has appointed Jesus Christ the ordinance of Heaven for their salvation, and has made a grant of him as such, to whosoever of Adam's lost posterity will make use of him for that purpose, by looking to him in the way of believing, without accepting in this grant any, if they are but of the world of mankind, John iii. 14, 15, 16.

2. The Mediator's commission for the administration is conceived in most ample terms, Luke iv. 18, 19. Isa. lxi. 1, 2. He is to administer the covenant, not only to the meek, poor, broken-hearted, but to the captives, the blind, bruised, prisoners, slaves, and broken men who have sold their inheritance. What sort of sinners can one imagine to be

excepted here? These terms are too general to admit of any exception as to sinners of mankind.

3. The ample powers given him as Administrator of the covenant. All power in heaven and in earth is granted to him, Matth. xxviii. 18. So there is none on earth accepted from his administering the covenant to them; the indemnity which the Father has put in the hands of his own Son to dispense, hath no accepted persons of mankind in it, but he is to dispense it to any of them all whom he will, John v. 21, 22. And it is remarkable, that upon this fulness of power committed to the Administrator of the covenant, the general offer of the gospel is founded, Mat. xi. 27, 28, and xxviii. 18, 19. All without exception are declared welcome to come and suck of these full breasts of the divine consolations contained in the covenant.

4. His executing of his commission in an unhampered manner, administering the covenant indifferently to any sinners of mankind; not this or that party of them, under this or the other denomination, but mankind in general, Prov. viii. 4. So the gospel in which the covenant is administered, is good tidings to all people, Luke ii. 10; and the gospel-feast is made unto all people, Isa. xxv. 6. Accordingly he gives his apostles commission in most ample terms, than which one cannot imagine more extensive, Mark xvi. 15, 'Go ye into *all* the *world*, and preach the gospel to *every* creature.'

5. Consider to whom Christ stands related as a Saviour by office. He is the Saviour of the body only, Eph. v. 23. being considered as actually saving from sin and wrath. But considered as an official Saviour, he is the Saviour of the world, as he is expressly called, 1 John iv. 14. John iv. 42. And his salvation is called the 'common salvation,' Jude 3.

6. *Lastly*, If it were not so, then there would be some of mankind-sinners excepted, for whom there would be no manner of warrant to believe in Christ, or take hold of the covenant, more than there is for devils: which is contrary to the scriptures, John iii. 16. Mark xvi. 15.*

USE. Know ye then that our Lord Jesus is empowered to administer the covenant of grace to you, and each one of you. There is a Saviour provided for you, to whom you

* The above particulars are more largely illustrated, *ubi supra*, under the title, *Sinners of mankind the object of the administration of the covenant.*

have a right, and to whom you may have access for life and salvation. Ye have heard much of the promised benefits of the covenant: let none say, they are excluded from them. On the contrary, whatever ye are or have been, your name is in Christ's commission for administering the covenant; and ye must either take that covenant, or perish as despisers of it.

SECONDLY, What are the ends of this administration, or the business thus put into Christ's hand.

1. To bring sinners into the covenant personally and savingly, Isa. xlix. 5.

2. When they are brought in, to be the sole manager of them, according to the covenant, till death, John v. 22,

3. To complete the happiness of his covenant-people, according to the covenant, in another world, Eph. v. 27. Col. i. 22.

These are the ends of this administration committed to Jesus Christ; this is the work that he hath to do as Administrator of the covenant. And the putting it in his hand was a method of grace at once adapted to the glory of God the offended party, the comfort and safety of sinners who had given the offence, and the honour of the Mediator the glorious Peace maker*.

THIRDLY, I come to consider the nature of this administration. And hereof we may have a view, by observing Christ's relations to the covenant, in which he stands as Administrator of it. We have seen already, that Jesus Christ, as party-contractor on man's side in the covenant, became the Mediator of the covenant, both substantial and official; that with respect to the conditionary part of it, he became the kinsman Redeemer in the covenant, the Surety of the covenant, and the Priest, the atoning Priest thereof. It remains that we consider his relations to the covenant as he is Administrator of it, which respects the promissory part thereof. And thus he bears a fivefold relation to the covenant, viz. the Trustee, the Testator, the Prophet, the King, and Intercessor of the covenant; each of which is a syllable of that name above every name, given him of the Father†.

From what has been said of the administration of the covenant, we make the following inferences.

* See these particulars amplified, *ubi supra*, under the title, *The ends of the administration of the covenant*.

† See all these relations illustrated, *ubi supra*, under their respective titles.

1. As the covenant is well ordered in itself, so it is well ordered in point of its administration ; and so it is ordered in all things, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Many a good bargain is marred as to the success of it by mismanagement, through the unskilfulness and unfitness of him into whose hands it is committed, But the covenant is put into the hand of an infallible Administrator, perfectly fit to deal with all concerned therein, and so cannot miss of an issue agreeable to the design of it. Two things are of fatal consequence in such matters. (1.) Unskilfulness ; and (2.) Want of power and ability. Through either of these in the manager, a promising contrivance may be marred in the management of it. The administration of the covenant of grace is a matter that requires the utmost skill, considering the difficulty of the thing in itself, and the ill disposition sinners are of with relation to it, But Jesus Christ is infinitely wise, and nothing can escape his foresight or observation, Col. ii. 3. He knows well the fit times and seasons, and has ‘ the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary,’ Isa. l. 4. There are many adversaries, set to oppose and counteract the design of the glorious contrivance, the administration of which is put in his hand : the whole force of hell is banded against it. But he is sufficiently enabled to carry it on over the belly of them all : all power in heaven and in earth being given him. And therefore one may conclude, that when the mystery of God shall be finished, the issue will be found exactly to answer the eternal plan.

2. While the covenant is administered to you, it is Jesus Christ himself with whom you have to do in that matter : he is the great Ambassador of heaven to you and each one of you, in this matter of the covenant, Heb. xii. 25. Ye would then look above ministers and ordinances unto himself, and regard them as persons and things by which Jesus Christ himself is treating with you, and regard him as your party with whom ye have to do. If ministers go beyond the bounds of their commission, ye may safely so far disregard what they say or do in that manner : but to fill your hearts with prejudices against them, on account of such and such faults ye espy in them, especially on the account of doing their duty, and so to make yourselves very easy as to the ordinances by them administered, and to slight these ordi-

nances under pretence that ye can spend the time otherwise to as great advantage; this is but to look on them as divided in their ministration from Christ, and so to cheat your own souls, 2 Cor. v. 20. Luke x. 16. What God then has joined, it will be dangerous so to put asunder. If ye took Christ himself for the party dealing with you, as indeed he is, it would engage you to take good heed how ye entertain the administration of the covenant among you.

3. They who would partake of the covenant, must come to Christ by faith, Isa. lv. 3. for that effect. He has the administration of it in his hand; so it is from him we must get it, with all the benefits and privileges of it. The whole of it is in him; so uniting with him we have it, and only that way we can have it. As is your interest in Christ, so is your interest in the covenant of grace: if he is yours in the way of special interest, your souls being married to him; then the privileges of the covenant are all yours, and the covenant is the security ye have for them, if ye are strangers to Christ, ye are strangers to the covenant of promise too, and so without hope and without God in the world.

4. Such as are personally entered into the covenant in a saving manner, and would improve the covenant for their daily needs, must still be coming to Christ for that end; since he is the Administrator of it, all the benefits of it are dispensed by his hand, John i. 16. So the life of a Christian comes to be a life of faith: forasmuch as the whole supply afforded them from heaven is benefits of the covenant, and the riches of the covenant are in Christ's hand as Administrator of it; and the way of believing in Christ is the way appointed for receiving them from him. So the more a Christian is in the exercise of faith, the more he employs the Administrator; and the more he lies about his hand, the more liberally he shares of the things of the covenant.

5. Sinners have abundant encouragement and security for their coming into the covenant, by believing in the Lord Jesus. We are not called to come to enter into a covenant with an unvailed God, the rays of whose glory in his holiness, justice and truth, and all his other perfections, might quite damp and dispirit the guilty creature; but as Christ as a second Adam has made the covenant with his Father, and fulfilled it in the whole of the condition thereof required on our part; so it is put in his hand, who is bone of our bone

and flesh of our flesh, to administer it unto any of the family of Adam; and in him we have the whole of it. Here all is ready for us, suited to our case. And we have his word of the gospel for our security, Matth. xxii. 4. and John vi. 37. And well may we trust him, believing the Son, believing his word, since the Father has trusted him with the whole administration of the covenant.

6. *Lastly*, There is no man who has the offer of Christ made him in the gospel, but if he continue in his sin, and die in it, he will perish with a witness, without all shadow of excuse, John xv. 22. The covenant is the contrivance of Heaven for salvation to lost sinners: in the administration of it, none are excluded from the benefit thereof; the net is spread out for even the worst of sinners, wherever the gospel comes. There is enough in the covenant for the worst of cases; the promises of it are made suitable to the sinner's case, both in respect of sin and of misery; so that whatever is their case, in the covenant there is a suitable cure. And that the sinner may at once lay hold on all, God has given Christ as the covenant to the people, making the embracing of Christ, the short and sure way for the sinner to have all. In him is lodged the quickening Spirit: so that by applying to him we may have life. They must then be left inexcusable who reject the offer of Christ, and will not come to him, that they may have life, John v. 40.

And now having opened to you the doctrine of the covenant of grace, that covenant on which the salvation of our souls depends, in discoursing of the parties in it, the parts of it, and the administration of it, I shall shut up the discourse on this subject, with a twofold use of the whole.

USE I. Of trial. Let every one put the question to himself, What interest have I in this covenant? Are ye personally brought within the covenant of grace in a saving manner, or not?

For your help in this inquiry, I shall offer you some marks or characters of those who by grace are personally instated through faith in the covenant of grace, before the Lord, under Christ the second Adam as their head.

1. They are such as have fled for refuge from the covenant of works to the covenant of grace, Heb. vi. 17, 18.

2. They are such as cordially approve of and acquiesce in the plan of the covenant, as suited to the honour of God, and to their case in particular, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

3. Having the discovery made to them of the covenant as made from eternity betwixt God and the second Adam, and in the gospel offered to them, they will satisfy themselves with Heaven's draught of it in their covenanting, so far as they understand it, and not go about to add to it, or diminish from it, Acts ix. 6.

4. The love of God in Christ, is habitually predominant in them, Prov. viii. 17. 'I love them that love me.'

5. Jesus Christ, the head of the covenant; is their head with their own consent.

6. The condition of the covenant, as fulfilled by Jesus Christ, is the alone ground of their confidence before the Lord, as to acceptance with God for time and eternity, and as to any of all the benefits of the covenant they look to partake of, Phil. iii. 3.

7. The promises of the covenant are a satisfying portion to their hearts, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

8. The spirit of the covenant is in them; and that is another spirit than what the men of the world are actuated by; Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

9. The laws of the covenant are in their hearts the holy law of the ten commandments, the eternal rule of righteousness, Heb. viii. 10*.

USE II. Of exhortation to sinners and to saints.

FIRST, Let sinners be exhorted to come into this covenant, by embracing it personally for themselves, so as they may be instated therein to all saving purposes. This covenant is brought to, and set before you in the gospel; so that you and every one of you must either be receivers or refusers of it. O refuse it not, for the refusing is dangerous beyond expression. Take hold of it, and embrace it, for it is your life: come, enter into it without delay. Ye are under the covenant of works, O sinners! where ye can have no life nor salvation. But the door of the new covenant is opened unto you, come, flee from the covenant ye were born under, and are living under; and let the sacred knot be cast this day, by your entering within the bond of the covenant of grace, accepting and embracing the offered covenant, to the instating of you personally in it, to all the purposes of life and salvation, grace and glory, by it.

* See all these particulars amplified, *ubi supra*. tit. *Trial of a saving personal interest in the covenant of grace.*

But that ye may more clearly perceive the duty ye are called to, and may not walk in the dark, in your aiming at embracing the covenant, and that the motives to it may have the more weight, I shall,

1. Lay before you, by what means it is that a soul embraceth the covenant of grace, and is instated in it effectually to salvation.

2. Offer some motives to press the exhortation on sinners to enter personally into the covenant.

FIRST, I shall lay before you, by what means it is that a soul embraceth the covenant of grace, and is instated in it effectually to salvation. This, in one word, is by faith in Jesus Christ, Acts xvi. 31. The covenant is held forth in the gospel to you: God saith to every one of you, ‘I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.’ And to state you in it personally, and to close the bargain with you, to all the intents and purposes of salvation, all that is required of you is *to hear*; that is, to believe, Isa. lv. 3. He that believeth is within the covenant of grace personally and savingly? he that believeth not, is still under the covenant of works, where the first Adam left him. This is the hand that takes hold of the covenant; thereby one signs the covenant for himself, and closes the bargain for his own salvation. This is the mouth of the soul, by which it consents to the covenant; and God becomes your God in covenant, and ye his covenanted people. So when we call you to embrace the covenant, and enter into it personally, all that we call you to is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

That believing on Christ should be the appointed mean of entering sinners into the covenant of grace, is very agreeable to the nature and end of that great transaction. For,

(1.) Hereby the grace of the covenant is preserved entire in the dispensation of the covenant; and by that means the promise is made sure to all the seed, Rom. iv. 16. Faith is contradistinguished to works, as grace is to debt, Rom. iv. 4, 5. If any work or doing of ours were that upon which we were instated in the covenant, and got the right to the promise, then the covenant, and benefits of it, would be of debt to us, contrary to the very design of that method of salvation, which is to exalt the free grace of God, and cut off all boasting. But the nature of faith on Christ is adapted to the exalting of grace, inasmuch as it is a grace purely re-

ceiving; not giving; taking all from Christ, without money and without price; laying the stress of the soul's acceptance with God wholly on what Christ has done and suffered; and renouncing entirely all doings and sufferings of our own in that point.

(2.) Hereby the sinner enters into the covenant, by uniting with Christ, who was the representative with whom it was made, John x. 9: and so the unity of the covenant and the representation in it, are preserved. If men entered into the covenant another way, as by accepting such and such properly called terms to them proposed, and promising for themselves the performance of them, the representation in the second covenant is marred, and there would in effect be as many covenants of grace, as there are persons embracing it at different times; at least Christ's covenant would be one, and ours another. But the covenant of grace being made with Christ, as the second Adam, in the name of all such as should be his, it is evident, that the only way of one's personal entering into such a covenant, must be by becoming his, standing related to the head of the covenant, as our head: and it is by faith, and no work or consent of ours differing from faith, that we are united to him, and become members of his body, Eph. iii. 17.

But here ariseth a weighty question, necessary to be touched, for clearing your way into the covenant, viz. What is that believing, by which one unites with Christ, and so enters into the covenant of grace? Believing, in the scripture-use of the word, is trusting a word, person, or thing. And hence the scripture-phrases of *believing to*, and *believing in* i. e. having trust to and in; phrases, however unusual with us in conversation, yet ordinary both in the Old and New Testament. It is the trusting a word, as to report, Isa. lxi. 1. in God's words, Psal. cvi. 12. It is trusting a person: thus the Israelites 'believed the Lord and his servant Moses; *Heb.* believed in the Lord, and in Moses his servant.' Job iv. 18. *Heb.* 'He believed not in his servants,' i. e. trusted them not. And it is the trusting a thing too, Job xxxix. 12. 'Wilt thou believe him,' viz. the unicorn? *Heb.* 'believe in him,' i. e. trust in him. Deut. xxviii. 66. *Heb.* 'Thou shalt not believe in thy life.'—And thence I conclude, that saving faith is, in the general, the trusting of a word, and of a person and thing held forth in that word.

Now, there is a twofold word to be believed by all those who would enter into the covenant of grace in a saving manner, namely, the word of the law, and the word of the gospel. The believing of the former is a faith of the law; and of the latter, a faith of the gospel. The faith of the law is the work of the spirit of God, as well as the saving faith of the gospel, though wrought by him in a very different manner. The former he works by the law, as a Spirit of conviction and bondage, convincing of sin and misery, Rom. viii. 15. with John xvi. 8. The latter he works by the gospel, as a quickening Spirit, a Spirit of saving illumination and adoption.

Whosoever then would enter into the covenant of grace, must, in the first place, have a faith of the law; which therefore is necessary to be preached to sinners. And by it a man believes three things.

1. That he is a sinner, a breaker of the law's commands, liable to divine vengeance. The law pronounces him a guilty man, and he believes the report of the law concerning himself in particular; and so, by this faith, his heavy and sorrowful heart echoes back to the voice of the law, *Guilty, guilty!* Rom. iii. 19. This faith is a divine faith, founded upon the testimony of God in his holy law; and rests not in the testimony of men, whether spoken or written. The Spirit of God, as a spirit of bondage, brings home the law to the man's conscience, and persuades him, that that law is the voice of the eternal God, and the voice of that God to him in particular; and so convinces him of sin upon God's own testimony. And thus he believes.

(1.) That his life and conversation is sinful and corrupt, displeasing and hateful in the sight of a holy God, according to the divine testimony, Rom. iii. 12. 'They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one.' He believes, what is true, that his omissions and commissions are to him innumerable; his righteousness and unrighteousness are both together sinful and displeasing to a holy God; that he is gone out of the way of God, and is walking in the way of destruction and misery.

(2.) That his heart is full of mischief and iniquity, according to the divine testimony, Jer. xvii. 9. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' He sees

those hellish lusts there, which he little noticed before. The law shining into the heart, discovers them; and pressing the man, irritates them; so as he believeth, that he has such a mystery of iniquity in his heart, as he could never before believe to be there, Rom. vii. 9.

3. That his nature is quite corrupted, according to the divine testimony, as one 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. ii. 1. And so his soul echoes back to the law's testimony, 'I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,' Psal. li. 5. crying, *Unclean, unclean*. He sees that his disease is not accidental, but natural and hereditary; and so that his nature cannot be mended, but must be renewed. And so he believes, not only that he does no good, but that he can do no good. And in all these respects he sees and believes himself to be an object loathsome in the sight of a holy God, loathsome in respect of his life, heart, and nature too.

2. By the law man believes, that he is a lost and undone sinner, under the curse of the law for his sin, Gal. iii. 10. He no more looks on the curse of the law as some strange thing, belonging only to some monsters of wickedness, and far from him. But the Spirit of God brings home the dreadful sentence of that broken law, and applies it close to him, as if he had said, thou art the man. And he groans out his belief thereof under the felt weight thereof, like a man under the sentence of death, Rom. vii. 9.

3. By it a man believes, that he is utterly incapable to help himself, and so that he must inevitably perish for ever if he get not help. He believes, that he cannot, by all his doings and sufferings, remove the curse of the law from off him, according to the divine testimony, as being 'without strength,' Rom. v. 6. nor change his own nature, heart, and life, in a right manner, according to that infallible testimony, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil,' Jer. xiii. 23. He believes himself to be a dead man spiritually; legally dead, and morally dead, as the apostle testifies of himself in that case, Rom. vii. 9.

This is the faith of the law: and the effect of it is a legal repentance, whereby the soul is broken and bruised with fear and terror of the wrath of God, grieves and sorrows for sin as a ruining and destructive evil, seriously de-

sires therefore to be freed from it, despairs of salvation by itself, and seriously looks out for relief another way, Acts ii. 37. and xvi. 29, 30. Thus the law is a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ; and the faith of the law makes way for the faith of the gospel. Not that this legal faith or legal repentance is the condition of the soul's welcome to Christ and the covenant of grace; our access to Christ and the covenant is proclaimed free, without any conditions or qualifications required in us to warrant us sinners of mankind to believe in Jesus Christ. But they are necessary to move and excite us to make use of our privilege of free access to Christ and the covenant: so that a sinner will never come to Christ nor embrace the covenant without them.

In calling you then to embrace the covenant, ye are called indirectly, and by consequence to this faith of the law, to believe that ye are sinners in life, heart, and nature; lost and undone, under the curse; and utterly unable to help yourselves. Yet this is not saving faith.

Saving faith, which unites to Christ, is the faith of the gospel: for the gospel only is the ministration of righteousness, 2 Cor. iii. 9. It is in it that the righteousness of faith is revealed unto faith, to be believed, Rom. i. 17. That is the word which gives the sinner the only notice of a Saviour, of the atoning blood, and the new covenant in that blood. And hence it is that it is the only word by which saving faith is begotten in the hearts of lost sinners, Gal. iii. 2. In this word of the gospel the Lord Jesus, with all his benefits and covenant, is to be believed on and embraced by faith, Rom. x. 8. And the word of the gospel being received by believing, we have Christ and his covenant, with all the benefits of it; faith being indeed the echo of the quickened soul to the word of grace that bringeth salvation, Mark i. 15. Isa. liii. 1. Gal. iii. 2. a trusting of the word of the gospel, the person, viz. the Saviour, and the thing therein held forth to us to be believed on for salvation.

This is that believing by which we are united to Christ, and entered into the covenant of grace. So the question being put, how shall I personally enter into the covenant of grace in a saving manner? I answer in the following particulars.

First, You must believe that there is a fulness of salvation in Christ for poor sinners. This is the constant report

of the gospel concerning him, Eph. iii. 8. Heb. vii. 25. He is therein held forth, as an able Saviour, able to save men from their sins, and from the wrath of God. His merit is a sufficient scone against the tempest of fiery wrath that incensed justice is ready to cause fly forth against transgressors, Isa. xxxii. 2. His spirit is sufficient to sanctify the most unholy, 1 Cor. vi. 11. The righteousness he fulfilled as the condition of the covenant is so valuable in itself, and in the eyes of his Father, that it is sufficient to procure justification, sanctification, and all other saying benefits to sinners, who in themselves deserve death and damnation. So that they are happy who are in him, and they shall never perish, but have everlasting life; and they shall be eternally secure under the covert of his righteousness, as a sufficient defence. Believest thou this?

This is the general faith of the gospel, which, being without particular application, doth not unite the sinner to Christ, nor enter him into the covenant; and may be found in reprobates and fallen angels, as being only an assent in general to the truth of the doctrine of the gospel, Matth. xiii. 20, 21. and viii. 29. But it is necessarily pre-requisite to a faith of particular application, by the nature of the thing; for I must first believe a saying to be true in itself, before I can trust to it for my part; and I must first believe a thing to be good in itself, before I can believe it is good for me. But where this faith is carried forward to uniting with Christ, it issues in an ardent desire of union and communion with Christ, an high esteem of him and his covenant, and a longing for his righteousness, as a hungry man for meat, or a thirsty man for drink.

Secondly, Ye must believe that Jesus Christ, with his righteousness and all his salvation, is by himself offered to sinners, and to you in particular. This is the plain voice of the gospel, Isa. lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17. Prov. viii. 4. But, alas! few believe it; yea, none will believe it to purpose, till the Spirit of the Lord make it plain to them, and persuade them by an inward illumination. Many secure sinners hear the gospel, and are glad of the offer; but they discern not Christ's voice in it; they hear it not as the voice of Christ himself to them, but as the word of men; hence it hath no due authority upon their consciences, and so they pass it over lightly.

But where true faith is a-working, the word of the gospel-offer is by the Holy Spirit inwardly brought home and applied to the soul in particular, with power, as the word of the Lord himself, and not of men, whereby the man is assured that it is the voice of Christ, and to him in particular, 1 Thess. i. 5. and ii. 13. And so the man applies it to himself by believing. This is necessary; for without it there can be no receiving of Christ; and the soul can see no solid ground of faith: For it is evident, that there can be no receiving aright, where the sinner does not believe the offer to be made to him in particular. And here begins the application of faith, an application tending to union with Christ.

Wherefore, if ye would unite with Christ, and so enter into the covenant of grace, sist yourselves before the Lord as condemned sinners under the curse of the law; and hear and believe the word of the gospel as made to you condemned and cursed sinners in particular. And so it will come to you as the offer of a pardon to one under sentence of death, as the rising sun to one sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death. And let not your heart misgive by unbelief, but believe the offer to be made to you, as it is indeed, (Isa. lv. 3.) by Christ himself.

Thirdly, Ye must believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and your Saviour in particular, by the Father's appointment and his own offer; and that, by the same appointment and offer, his righteousness the condition of the covenant, and eternal life the promise of the covenant, are yours: Yours, I mean not in possession, but in right thereto, so far as ye may lawfully and warrantably take possession of, and use them as your own to all intents and purposes of salvation. Think not this too much for you: it is no more than what is necessary to saving faith in Christ. If you believe only in the general that Christ is the Saviour of the world, and don't believe that he is your Saviour in particular, what do ye believe more than devil's do? They believe that he is Jesus a Saviour, Mark i. 24. Ye must needs believe that he is your Saviour, if ye would go beyond them, and consequently that his righteousness and salvation is yours, in the sense before opened; for where Christ is given, all is given with him, Rom. viii. 32. How can you take or receive him as your Saviour, if he is not yours in-

deed? A man may take possession fraudulently indeed of what he does not believe to be his by right: but no man can fairly and honestly claim and take possession of what he does not believe to be his own. Certainly God must first give Christ to us, before we can receive him, John iii. 27. Giving on God's part, and receiving on ours, are correlates, and the former must needs go before the latter. Therefore believe firmly, that Christ is your Saviour in particular, his righteousness is yours, and eternal life is yours.

Fourthly, Ye must wholly trust in him as your own Saviour, and in his righteousness as made over to you, for his whole salvation to you in particular, upon the ground of God's faithfulness in his word. This is that saving faith, or believing on Christ Jesus, by which a sinner is united unto Christ, and personally entered within the covenant of grace, Acts xvi. 31. Isa. xxvi. 3, 4. Rom. i. 17. Phil. iii. 9. Gal. ii. 16. Acts xv. 11. 1 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Cor. ii. 5. This, according to the scripture, is a sinner's receiving and resting upon Christ for salvation, as saving faith is defined in our Catechism. And this is indeed believing, and nothing but believing, according to the scriptural use of that word.

1. I say, this is plainly believing in the scriptural use of that word. It is a trusting of or in a person, viz. Jesus Christ, and God in him, the personal object of saving faith, Acts xvi. 31;—a trusting in a thing, viz. the righteousness of Christ, the ultimate real object of faith, Rom. i. 17. therefore called faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 25.—and a trusting in a word, viz. in the record and testimony of God, the word of the promise of the gospel, John iii. 16: the proximate or nearest real object of faith. And all this for the great purpose and end of salvation.

2. This is the receiving of Christ alone for salvation, John i. 12. God has appointed Christ Saviour of the world, and your Saviour: you hear that published in the gospel, and you believe accordingly, that he is your Saviour, by his Father's appointment and his own offer: thereupon you trust on him, and on him alone, for salvation, and all you need for salvation. Is not this a receiving of him for your part in the character of a Saviour, wherein his Father sent him to you? a taking of him to yourself as he is offered to you? an using of him as your own Saviour by the divine appointment and offer, as trusting him for the ends for which that offer and

appointment was made? Thus your whole case is put in his hand, with heart and good-will; and you truly receive him as appointed for and offered to you.

3. This is resting on Christ alone for salvation, according to the scripture, Isa. xxvi. 3. Neither can one imagine what way a person can rest on a word, or a soul can rest upon a person, but by trusting them, or trusting in them. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 8. and xlv. 11. So I conclude, that this trust in Christ is that believing on him, by which the soul is united to Christ, and brought into the covenant in a saving manner. And for opening of it, consider the import of this trust.

(1.) It imports not only a willingness, but a sincere and earnest desire to be delivered from sin and wrath; a desire to be sanctified as well as to be justified; to be delivered from the reigning power, pollution, practice, and inbeing of sin, as well as from the guilt of it, Rom. vii. 24, 25. For it is a trusting on Christ, not for the half of his salvation, viz. salvation from wrath only, as many do who are by no means desirous to part with sin; but for the whole of it, even salvation from sin too, the principal part thereof, Matth. i. 21: Faith is a believing with the heart and affection of the soul: The whole salvation of Christ is the believer's choice: it is the end he desires to compass, and the trust of faith is exerted as the means to compass that end.

(2.) A renouncing of all confidence in all that is not Christ or in Christ, as to that matter particularly. Faith overturns self-confidence, law-confidence, and creature-confidence, to build on a quite new ground, Phil. iii. 3. and Jer. xvi. 19. For it is a trusting in Christ and his righteousness wholly; a trusting or believing with all the heart, Prov. iii. 5. and Acts viii. 37. The believer is carried off the works of the law, to the blood of Jesus; for his justification; and out of himself too, unto the Spirit of holiness, for sanctification; being persuaded that no doing or suffering of his own can procure to him the pardon of, or atone for the least piece of guilt; and that he is not able truly to mortify one lust, more than to purge away the guilt of one sin, Matth. v. 3. and Isa. xlv. 24. Thus is the sandy foundation overturned, that the soul may build on Christ the Rock.

(3.) A hearty approbation of the plan of salvation according to the covenant, manifested in the gospel, as suited to the divine perfections, and to the case of sinners, and their

own case in particular, Matth. xi. 6. and 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. Without this, no man that knows what God is, what sin is, and what is the worth of his own soul, will ever venture his salvation upon it. One's trusting his salvation to Christ and his righteousness, speaks him to be well pleased therewith, as what one may safely trust to, and that in the sight of a holy just God. And this is that rejoicing in Christ Jesus which makes an illustrious piece of the believer's character, Phil. iii. 3. It implies,

[1.] An eyeing of Jesus Christ in this matter as a crucified Saviour, having fulfilled all righteousness, according to the stated condition of the covenant, 1 Cor. ii. 2. This is the view that faith takes of Christ, while the sinner stands trembling before a holy God, beholding him as lifted up on the cross, as the brazen serpent was on the pole in the wilderness, Isa. xlv. 22. So faith is called faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 25.; his righteousness whereof the shedding of his blood was the completing part, being the only spring of the believer's hope.

[2.] A real persuasion of the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, to save sinners, and them in particular, from sin and wrath; to answer for them before a holy just God in the eye of his holy law, and procure for them eternal holiness and happiness, Phil. iii. 9. There is no saving faith without this; Christ's ability must be believed, and that with application to your own case, Matth. ix. 28. And in order to this, faith fixes its view on Christ's righteousness, as the righteousness of God, and so of infinite value and efficacy, Phil. iii. 9. 1 John i. 7. The reason why the gospel, and no other doctrine whatever, is the power of God to the salvation of sinners, is because therein is revealed the righteousness of God unto faith, Rom. i. 16, 17.; and that is the only righteousness suited to the divine perfections and the sinner's case.

[3.] An acquiescing in that way of salvation for themselves, Matth. xi. 6. The believer sees the sufficiency and safety of it, and he hath a cordial liking of it for the way of his salvation. The mystery of Christ is to him the power of God, and the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 24. His soul pronounces them safe and blessed that are in it; he desires for his own part to be found in it, Phil. iii. 9. and is persuaded he would be well, saved from sin and wrath, if he were in it.

(4.) A betaking one's self unto Christ and his righteousness alone, for salvation from sin and wrath. This is done by this trusting on him and his righteousness wholly, Ruth ii. 12. The sinner believing that Christ is his Saviour and that his righteousness is made over to him by free gift, and withal that this his Saviour, with his righteousness, is sufficient to save him from sin and wrath, doth accordingly trust on Christ and his righteousness, for salvation from sin and wrath.

5. *Lastly*, An affiance, confidence, or trust on Christ and his righteousness, that he will save us from sin and wrath, according to his promise. That faith is an affiance, confidence, or trust, is evident from the whole tenor of the holy scripture. So it is expressly called. Isa. xxvi. 3, 4. and I. 10. Psal. xxviii. 7. and cxviii. 8, 9. Heb. x. 35. And that it is a particular trust, viz. that Christ will save us, is evident from the nature of the thing: for he that trusts in a person for a thing, hath surely a persuasion of the same degree with the trust, that that person will do that thing for him. And hence, where the party trusted doth fail, the party trusting is confounded and ashamed, as being disappointed in that which he trusted he would do for him: and since the trust of faith is never disappointed, therefore it is observed, that the believer shall never be ashamed, Rom. x. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 6. 2 Tim. i. 12.; which plainly imports the trust of faith in the Lord to be, that he will do for the sinner what he trusts him for, otherwise there would be no place for this shame in any case*.

SECONDLY, I come now to offer some motives to press the exhortation on sinners to enter personally into the covenant.

1. Being out of this covenant, ye are under the broken covenant of works, which makes your state a deplorable one. Some stand off from the gospel covenant, because they do not incline to come under a covenant with God. But, alas! they do not consider, that there never was nor will be a moment of their life wherein they were or are free from a covenant with God. Ye are born under the covenant of works, and the bond of that covenant is fast wreathed about

* Some few enlargements in these particulars, with objections of serious exercised souls relative to the doctrine here laid down, and answers thereto may be seen, *ubi supra*, under the title, *The faith of the gospel intiating in the covenant*.

your necks, as long as ye are out of the covenant of grace: for the two covenants divide the whole world between them, Rom. vi. 14.; and there is no getting out of the bond of the first covenant, but by marrying with Christ, and so coming under the bond of the second, Rom. vii. 4. And of the broken covenant I may say, that it is strong to command, curse, condemn, and kill those under it, Gal. iii. 10. but absolutely barren as to the affording strength for duty, life, or salvation, Rom. viii. 3.

2. Ye are all under the covenant of grace externally and by profession, as being baptised in the name of Christ, Gal. iii. 27. Why will ye not really be what you have professed to be, members of Christ, believing in him, within the bond of the covenant in a saving manner? Why will ye aggravate your own condemnation, by professing to take hold of the covenant, and yet before the Lord keeping your necks out of that yoke?

3. It is a most honourable covenant. The parties in it confederate are God and his own Son Jesus Christ, and in him the general assembly of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. And seemeth it a small thing to you to be confederated with these?

4. It is a most precious covenant, being a covenant in the blood of the Son of God, 1 Cor. xi. 25. It could not be purchased otherwise: heaven and earth, set at odds by the breaking of the first covenant, could not be united again at less expence. Slight it not.

5. It is a most advantageous covenant, and most suitable for you. It is most advantageous for time and for eternity, 1 Tim. iv. 8. There is no case you are or can be in, but there is a suitable help for it in the covenant. Yea, it is suited to your inability for the duties of it, not by loosening the bond of the holy commandments, but promising strength, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. and to your fickleness and native instability, John x. 28, 29.

6. It is freely offered to you, and every one of you, Rev. xxii. 17. Not only is there a warrant for your entering into it, but that warrant is intimated to you, and ye are invited, yea commanded, to come in, Luke xiv. 23. 1 John iii. 23.

7. Jesus Christ himself is appointed Administrator of it to you, Isa. lxi. 1. Regard it for the sake of the glorious Ad-

administrator. He is Heaven's Ambassador to you, and every one of you, in the matter of this covenant : so that if ye refuse it, ye must refuse it at his hand.

8. He administers it to sinners very honourably, taking them to himself, that he may bring them into the covenant, admitting them into it by union with himself.

9. *Lastly*, Without this covenant there is no salvation, Eph. ii. 12. Either ye must be in it, or perish for ever. When the first covenant was broken, there was a second made for the help of sinners ; if ye refuse the second, there is not a third. It is the last ship bound for Immanuel's land.

Wherefore let this be a time of your embracing the covenant ; and ye that have embraced it before, renew your acceptance of it, that ye may get it sealed by the sacrament.

(1.) Stir up the faith of the law in your own souls, as a preparative to the faith of the gospel.

(2.) Set before you the promises of the gospel, and believe on Jesus Christ, in whom they are all yea and Amen.

(3.) *Lastly*, In solemn prayer to God, be as express and particular as may be in these things, and so solemnly enter into the covenant in express words before the Lord, Isaiah xlv. 5.

SECONDLY, and lastly, Let those who have personally entered into the covenant of grace, and are now by faith instated in it, walk worthy of the covenant, walk as becomes the covenant, Phil. i. 27. Look to the covenant which ye are taken into, and let your life and conversation be agreeable thereto.

1. Be holy in the whole of your life, 1 Pet. i. 15. Holiness is the great end of the covenant, next to the glory of God. It is the holy covenant ye are brought into ; holiness goes through the whole of it, and the design of it was to make sinners holy. And ye must evidence the reality of your being in it by holiness, holiness of heart and life, Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. An unholy life, and an unsanctified heart in which sin rules and reigns, will be a decisive evidence of estrangement from the covenant.

2. Turn not back to your former lusts in your state without the covenant, 1 Pet. i. 14. The men of the first covenant live, and cannot but live in their sins, because death domineers under that covenant ; and living lusts feed on

their souls, as worms do on the dead body. But under the covenant of grace, life reigns; and the soul being thereby restored to life, will cast off these, Col. iii. 7, 8. Beware of backsliding and apostasy. It is dangerous to the last degree, Luke ix. 62. 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' That is the way hypocrites pull off their mask, 1 John ii. 19. Remember Lot's wife. But true believers shall be saved from it, Heb. x. 38, 39. 'Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.' Wherefore, 'hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy Father's house,' Psal. xlv. 10.

3. Mix not again with the world lying in wickedness, but carry yourselves as a separate company, under a new covenant, and a new head, Acts ii. 40. 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation.' If ye are really brought into the covenant, ye are come out from among them: shew that it is so, by your keeping at a distance from them. The grace of the covenant secures it as to all true believers, Psal. xii. 7. And,

(1.) Chuse not their company, Psal. xxvi. 4, 5. It is dangerous as a pest-house, 1 Cor. xv. 34. Many of the truly godly have been wounded in their soul and conscience deeply thereby; witness Peter in the high priest's hall. Many who have had very fair appearances once a-day, have been ruined by ill company, Prov. xiii. 20. 'A Companion of fools shall be destroyed.' There is no eviting it altogether in this life, 1 Cor. v. 10. But take heed ye have God's call, and then may ye expect the divine protection. Why will ye chuse their company? they are not going your way.

(2.) Conform not to their way, Rom. xii. 2. Ye have declared yourselves of a different, yea, a contrary society; why then will ye do as they do? To walk according to the course of this world, speaks one to be a child of wrath, not a child of the covenant. Being come into the covenant, your privilege is beyond others: it is expected then that ye should do more than others, who have not your privilege, Matth. v. 47. The privilege is very singular, ye must then be singular in your walk, in comparison of the world lying

in wickedness, though you should be wondered at, Zech. iii. 8. 1 Pet. i. 4.

4. Remember that ye are no more your own, but the Lord's by covenant, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. God has offered his covenant unto you, ye have entered into it: so ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Let this be an answer to the temptations that ye will meet with; say to them as Jephthah did to his daughter, Judges xi. 35. 'I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.' If others say, their tongues and themselves are their own, and they have no Lord over them, ye cannot say it: for if you have come into the covenant, ye have said, as Isa. xlv. 5. 'I am the Lord's.' And if you are his, ye must be for him only, wholly, and for ever.

5. Espouse the interests of the covenant, saying, 'Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' Matt. vi. 10. Have common friends and enemies with the God of the covenant, Psal. xvi. 2, 3. and cxix. 21. Your own interest is in it: and if it be really so, the interest of Christ's kingdom in the world will be yours, and ye will fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh, as the adversaries of the covenant. They are very low in the world at this day, and in this land; though the nation is under the bond of solemn covenants to God, that bond is little regarded, backslidings are multiplied, and the generation is dealing treacherously with a witness. If ye have embraced the covenant of grace for your own souls, it will natively produce a well tempered concern for the covenanted reformation of yourselves and the land.

6. Pursue earnestly the ends of the covenant. These are the destruction of sin, and the service of the Lord, Luke i. 74. Christ came 'to destroy the works of the devil;' hold hand to this end of the covenant in yourselves and others. Study mortification of your own lusts in the first place: labour to break the power of sin in others, according as ye have opportunity, and to weaken Satan's interest in the place wherein you live. Serve the Lord diligently in the duties of inward worship, and in the duties of morality, first and second table duties: and as ye have access, stir up one another thereto.

7. *Lastly*, In all ye do, act as under the influence of this covenant, and not of the covenant of works. Be evangelical

in all your duties, and the whole strain of your conversation. The covenant is a covenant of grace : let the grace, mercy, and love of the covenant, be your great motives to obedience, 2 Cor. v. 14. To pretend to embrace the covenant of grace, and in the mean time to serve the Lord as bondmen, just for fear of punishment and hope of reward, is to run back to the old covenant.

More particularly, walk worthy,

1. Of the parties in the covenant; Col. i. 10. 'Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.' The confederates in the covenant of grace, which ye are taken into, are the most glorious and honourable parties that ever entered into a covenant together ; even God and his own Son the second Adam, under whom believers come in as members under the head. View the glory and majesty of these parties, the infinite wisdom, love, and grace to poor sinners, wherewith this transaction was managed from eternity ; and consider yourselves as taken into the same covenant with them ; and ye must see that ye have need to take heed to walk worthy of such confederates. And;

1st. Gratitude obliges to this. Should not the poor sinful creature, considering itself taken into the communion of God and his Son's covenant, look on himself as highly honoured, beyond whatever he could have expected ? 1 John i. 9. and ought he not thereupon to be careful to walk worthy of that honourable society ? to carry as becomes that honourable character ?

2dly, The unsuitable walking of those taken into the covenant reflects dishonour on the glorious parties into whose covenant he is taken, Rom. ii. 24. While men give up their names to Christ, and yet walk in the way of sin, they bring up an ill report on the ways of God, and cause the graceless world to blaspheme the glorious name. Then,

(1.) Study to walk so as to 'be followers of God,' Eph. v. 1. Labour to imitate him in all his imitable perfections. He is your God, and ye are his people, if ye are really within the covenant ; and surely a people will strive to conform to the nature and will of their God. Be compassionate and merciful to those in misery, ready to do good to all as ye have access, yea even to your very enemies : so shall ye prove yourselves children of the God of the covenant; Matth. v. 44, 45.

(2.) Conform yourselves to the example of the Head of the covenant. They to whom Christ's death brings salvation, will follow the example he left us in his life, 1 John ii. 6. 'He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.' He has writ a fair copy of a life for our imitation, John xiii. 15. and will have his people learn of him, Mat. xi. 29. We are apt to follow examples in things suited to our nature. Christ's example is every whit perfect, and no other is so: and what example should have more influence on the members than that of the Head?

(3.) Labour to maintain actual communion and fellowship with God in Christ, Cant. iii. 5: The covenant puts men in a state of communion with God, 1 John. i. 3: That is a great privilege; but oftentimes much misimproved by God's own children, who fall secure and indisposed for converse with God, Cant: v. 8.; grieve the Spirit, and so provoke him to depart; regard some iniquity in their heart, and so mar the course of influences, and their own access to God.

(4.) Be heavenly in your frame and walk, Phil. iii. 20. God is in heaven, your head Christ is in heaven; and your treasure is there: why should not your heart be there too? The due frame of a communicant, that has taken hold of the covenant is set down, Cant: iii. 6: 'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and all powders of the merchant!' And it is sad to see those who are in the covenant grovelling among the dust of this earth, like those that are without; to see the heavenly seed like the seed of the serpent. Set your affections then on things above, and not on things on the earth:

Lastly, Let it be your greatest care to please God, to give content to the heart of Christ, Col. i. 10. It should be your great question, 'What shall I render to the Lord?' Let the love of the Father and the Son influence you to this manner of walking. And let God's displeasure be to you the most horrible thing, that you would rather venture on the displeasure of the whole world than his.

2. Walk answerable to the parts of the covenant. And, 1st, To the condition of the covenant performed by Jesus Christ, viz. his fulfilling all righteousness, in his being born holy, living holy; satisfying justice by his death and sufferings, to procure you the promises of the covenant. And,

(1.) Let the stress of your acceptance with God all along lie upon that, and that only; Phil. iii. 3. Whatever you look to obtain from God, whether for time or eternity, let all your confidence for it be laid on that ground only. Whatever you go to seek from God, whatever service you offer to God, or do for him, let it be laid on that altar, as ever ye would have it accepted, Col. iii. 17. It is not only when our duties are ill performed, but when they are best done, that we must place our confidence here: for our best duties will otherwise be unacceptable.

(2.) Walk humbly as debtors to free grace, 1 Tim. i. 15. Look to the rock whence ye were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye were dug. See Ezek. xvi. Remember, whatever be your attainments, gifts, or graces, ye are decked with borrowed feathers: be not proud of them. The condition on which any promise is performed to you, you could never perform: the price of the least mercy you could not pay. Only Jesus Christ has set up the poor bankrupt again.

(3.) Walk in love Eph. v. 2. 'Walk in love' to God in Jesus Christ. This is the fulfilling of the law: and there is the greatest reason for it, both from what he is in himself, and what he is to us. One flame is fit to kindle another. Such love was never seen among creatures, as God has shewn to man; and shall it not inflame our hearts? Walk in love to one another, and in love to mankind.

(4.) Walk thankfully. The whole life of a Christian should be a life of thankfulness, 1 Pet. ii. 9. Eternal life is won by Christ's fulfilling the condition of the covenant; it is received in the first-fruits of it, and possessed in Christ the head, by faith. What then remains but to express our thankfulness in a well-ordered life, for the unspeakable free gift?

2dly, To the promises of the covenant; they are 'great and precious,' 2 Pet. i. 4. Happy are they that have them for their security, and all that are within the covenant have them so.

(1.) Live upon them, let your souls feed on them, and account them the great stock ye have to trust to, Psal. cxix. 162. This must be done by believing them, and that with application. However little you have in hand, ye have a full covenant of promises, which are Heaven's bills and bonds, that make a good stock. And so reckon, that though ye

have nothing, yet ye possess all things, viz. in Christ; ye have them in the promise, Col. ii. 10. 'Ye are complete in him.'

(2.) Resolutely set about every duty in the faith of the promise. It will be too hardy to venture on the least without it; and the hardest and most difficult may be ventured on with it, 2 Tim. ii. 1. God calls his people to no duty, but what the covenant has furnished for in the promise. And in the faith of it the weak is made strong, and without it the proud helpers stoop.

(3.) Resist temptations in the faith of the promise. The least of them is able to lay us by, if the Lord do not stand by us: the shock of the most violent of them may be endured, and one come off safe, if encountered in the faith of the promise, Eph. vi. 16. It is the promise in the hand of faith that keeps the tempted safe, and makes his resistance successful.

(4.) Bear crosses, trials, and afflictions, in the faith of the promise, Psal. xxvii. 13. There is no getting forward to heaven, but by the way of the cross: these deep waters must needs be swimm'd through; but the faith of the promise will bear up the head, and keep from sinking. It will bring in comfort from the covenant, when other streams are dried.

Lastly, Die in the faith of the promise, Heb. xi. 13. That is the last battle to be fought: and then the time draws near of the full accomplishment of the promise to the Lord's people; and that is a special season of exercising faith on the promises.

3dly, and *lastly*, Walk suitably to the administration of the covenant, which is a most happy one, as being lodged by the Father in Christ's hand. And,

(1.) Go to Christ for all you need. To whom should we go but to him, since he is Administrator of the covenant, and all is in his hand? Whether you need light, life, strength, or whatsoever is necessary for time or eternity, go to him for it.

(2.) Be obedient to his laws, the laws of the covenant. If he administers the covenant to you effectually to your salvation, he is your King and Lord, and ye must receive the law at his mouth, Psal. cxix. 6.

(3.) Submit to the discipline of the covenant. If ye meet

with crosses, afflictions, and trials, take them kindly, blessing God that they are not curses; effects of revenging wrath.

(4.) Believe that all ye meet with is well ordered. It is so, for it is the product of the wisdom of the great Administrator of the covenant.

(5.) *Lastly*, Do your endeavour amongst all, as ye have access, to advance the covenant; that those who are without, may be brought in; and that those who are within, may be edified. For Christ is to administer the covenant to who-soever of mankind sinners will receive it.

Thus, by the mercy of God, I have travelled through this subject, the covenant of grace, and laid before you the principal things relating to it; having formerly treated of the covenant of works. In the first covenant, see your misery; in this see the remedy, and apply it by believing. You have here had the mystery of salvation by Christ opened up at large. May the Lord himself open your understandings to understand it, and your hearts to receive it; and save you from slighting it: for so it will be a witness against you.

OF CHRIST THE ONLY REDEEMER OF GOD'S ELECT.

GAL. iv. 4, 5.—When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

WE are now to speak of the Mediator of the new covenant, Jesus Christ, and to consider our Redeemer in his person, offices, and states. As to the first of these, it is plainly taught in the text.

In the former chapter, and in the first part of this, the apostle insists upon the church's freedom from the Mosaic dispensation, which was a very toilsome and burdensome service. This he illustrates by the similitude of a pupil and his tutors, ver. 1, 2. and then he applies it in the following verse, (1.) To the church's bondage under the Old Testament dispensation, when she was in her infant state, kept in subjection under that rigid and strict administration, which served for a rudiment, whereby she was instructed for the

most part by resemblances taken from earthly things. (2.) To her freedom from that bondage under the New Testament, in the words of our text. Where we have,

1. The season in which this freedom or redemption was brought about : *When the fulness of the time was come*, says the apostle. God wrought this deliverance for his people in the time that he had pitched and resolved upon, as the most fit and proper for it.

2. We have the means of this deliverance, namely Christ's incarnation, and manifestation in the flesh ; *God sent forth his own Son, made of a woman*. He sent his own Son into the world, the second person of the glorious and adorable Trinity, who was incarnate in a miraculous way, being conceived in the womb of a virgin, without the company of a man.

3. We have the condition in which Christ came ; *made under the law*. Being made flesh, he subjected himself to both the precepts and curse of the law. He fulfilled all righteousness, and gave complete satisfaction to all the demands of the law in the holiness and integrity of his life, and he bore the punishment threatened for sin, in the bloody and cruel sufferings which he endured in his death.

4. The freedom and deliverance itself : *God sent forth his Son*, thus qualified, *to redeem them that were under the law* ; that is, to free all the elect from the curse and punishment that was due to them for the transgression of it. Hence it is said, Gal. iii. 13. ' Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' He freed the whole church from that rigour and servitude under which she was as to her outward state. And hereby also was prepared to believers *the adoption of sons* : by which we are to understand, not only the benefit of adoption itself, which was the privilege of believers under the Old Testament as well as now under the New, but also and chiefly a clearer manifestation of that privilege, and a more free use and fruition of it. They have now a more full and plentiful measure of the Spirit than believers had under the old Testament dispensation.

The doctrine arising from the text is,

Doctr. ' The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Illustrate this grand truth, that Jesus Christ, being the eternal Son of God, became man.

III. Prove that Christ is God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew, that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, Let us consider the titles and names of our Redeemer.

1. He is called *Lord*, because of his absolute and universal sovereignty and dominion over all the creatures. 'He is Lord of all,' says the apostle, Acts x. 36. His dominion extendeth to all things in heaven, earth, and hell; 'He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all,' Psal. ciii. 19. He is the sole monarch of the whole world, and all the princes and potentates in the earth are but his deputies and vicegerents. He is 'the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,' as the apostle justly styles him, 1 Tim. vi. 15. He hath a natural and essential right and authority over all things as he is God, equal with the Father; and he hath a delegated authority as Mediator. The government belongs to him originally as God, and derivatively as God-man, Mediator. He holds his crown by immediate tenure from Heaven. He is declared to be King by the decree and appointment of the Father, Psal. ii. 6. God hath invested him with a royal authority over all the creatures. It is said, that 'he hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the Head over all things to the church,' Eph. i. 22. He rules from sea to sea, and to the ends of the earth, yea, to the utmost bounds of God's creation. All the creatures are subject to his dominion, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate, angels, devils, men, seas, storms and tempests, all obey him. But in a special manner he is King in Zion; he reigns and rules in the church, and sways his royal sceptre there. He is Lord of all the creatures by creation, of the elect by redemption, and of believers by their voluntary resignation and surrender of themselves unto him.

2. He is called *Jesus*, because he is the Saviour of the elect

world, and delivers them from sin and wrath. This was declared by an angel to the virgin Mary before his conception in her womb, Luke i. 31. 'Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus.' This was revealed to Joseph in a dream, Matth. i. 21. The name *Jesus* is there interpreted to signify a Saviour; and the angel of the Lord, a messenger sent from God, is the expositor. Christ was sent by his Father to be the Saviour of the elect. Now, a Saviour in the proper signification of the word, is one that delivereth from evil. Accordingly Christ not only saves his people from the worst of evils, but bestows upon them the greatest of good. He delivers them from the guilt, stain, and dominion of sin, the wrath of God, the malediction and accusations of the law, and eternal death and misery; and he gives them grace and righteousness, eternal life and glory. He is a Saviour to protect and defend, and a Saviour to bless and save them, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. He is the only Saviour of lost sinners, and there is no salvation but through him, Acts iv. 12.

3. He is called *Christ*, because he was anointed unto his office by the Father. This title very fitly followeth the former. Jesus implies his office in general, and Christ his designation or ordination to his office. He is an anointed Saviour. This is frequently expressed in the scripture, Psal. xlv. 7. 'God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Isa. lxi. 1. 'The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek,' &c. Acts x. 38. 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power.' From all which places we see, that Christ's anointing is not to be understood literally, but by a trope and figure, the sign being put for the thing signified. Several persons were anointed of old, as wrestlers among the Gentiles; which may be applied to Christ, who was to conflict and wrestle with all the powers of hell and the world, with all the oppositions and difficulties that were in the way of man's salvation. But this term of anointing is rather taken from the customs of the ceremonial law. There were three sorts of persons commonly anointed among the Jews; as kings. Thus Saul, David, Solomon, &c. were anointed with material oil; and hence were called *the Lord's anointed*.—Priests. All the priest's that ministered in the tabernacle or temple were anointed, and chiefly the high priest,

who was a special figure and type of Christ.—The prophets. Hence God gave Elija a commission to go and anoint Elisha to be prophet in his room, 1 Kings xix. 16. As oil strengthened and suppld the joints, and made them agile and fit for exercise, so it denoted a designation and fitness in a person for the function to which he was appointed. Thus Christ, because he was not to be a typical Prophet, Priest, or King, was not typically, but spiritually anointed; not with a sacramental, but real unction; not of men, but immediately of God. There are two things implied in the anointing of Christ.

(1.) It implies the Father's fitting and furnishing him with all things necessary, that he might be a complete Redeemer to his people. As God gave him a body and human nature; that he might be capable to suffer; so he filled and replenished his soul with all the gifts and graces of his Spirit. Hence it was promised of old concerning him, 'that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' The Psalmist tells us, that he was 'fairer than the sons of men, and grace was poured into his lips.' He, 'received not the Spirit by measure,' but was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. All this was the Father's work, and therefore he saith, 'Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth,' Isa. xlii. 1.

(2.) It implies the Father's giving him a commission to redeem poor sinners from hell and wrath. He was invested with a fulness of authority and power for this very end. And therefore in scripture he is said to be *sealed*, as having his commission under the great seal of Heaven. Hence he says, Isa lxi. 1. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me,' &c. Every thing that Christ did in bringing about the redemption of an elect world, was given him in commission. His coming to the world in the fulness of time was by the order and appointment of the Father. So he shews, John viii. 42. 'I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.' The business on which he came was determined by Heaven. So in the text it is said, *God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, to redeem them that were under the law*, &c. His death and bloody sufferings, which were the

price of man's redemption, and the ransom of their souls, were enjoined by the Father. Hence says he, John x. 18. 'This commandment, (viz: relating to laying down his life,) have I received of my Father.'

Secondly, We may consider his office and work in the general. He is called the Mediator, which properly signifies a midsmān, that travels betwixt two persons who are at variance to reconcile them. Now, Christ is Mediator, (1.) In respect of his person; being a middle person betwixt God and man, participating of both natures. (2.) In respect of his office; being a middle person dealing betwixt God and man, in the offices of a Prophet, Priest; and King. Which will be more particularly illustrated in the sequel.

He is the Redeemer. To *redeem* is to buy a thing again; as the nearest a-kin was to buy again the mortgaged land, and so to rescue and deliver from poverty, and misery; and bondage: This is the import of the word in the original. The elect are the redeemed: it is all they, and they only, as was proved before.

This redemption imports; (1.) That the elect were first the Lord's by creation, his property, and bound to serve and obey him. (2.) That they were sold, and in a state of bondage, in their natural condition; slaves to sin and Satan, the captives of the mighty; prisoners to the law, and obnoxious to the justice of God. (3.) That they are recovered or redeemed from this state of vassalage, captivity and slavery, by the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are redeemed by him two ways.

1. By price or purchase, laying down his life a ransom for them. He came to 'give his life a ransom for many,' Matth. xx. 28; that is to die in the stead of his people. His life intervened as a price to obtain their redemption. Hence is that note in the song of the redeemed, Rev. v. 9. 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.' They were fallen under the dominion of Satan, and liable to eternal death, and could not obtain their liberty by escape, or by mere force and power; for they were arrested and detained prisoners by order of divine justice: so that till God the Supreme Judge was satisfied, there could be no discharge. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ hath procured their deliverance by his death and bloody sufferings. Hence the apostle says, Col. i. 14. 'We have redemption through his

blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' No less than the precious blood of Christ, who was God and man in one person, could be a sufficient price for the redemption of poor captive sinners.

2. By power and conquest. By his death on the cross he spoiled principalities and powers. And he manifested this power in his ascension; for when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. And in the day of power he redeems his people from the slavery of sin and Satan, the curse of the law, from the sting of death, and the wrath of God; and puts them in possession of a full salvation.

The former, viz. redeeming by price or purchase, Christ doth as a Priest, the latter as a Prophet and King. Both were absolutely necessary: for without a ransom justice would not quit us nor let us go; and without overcoming or conquering power, the elect, while slaves to sin and Satan, will not quit their master, nor accept of liberty.

This redemption of elect souls was agreed upon by the Father and the Son in the covenant of grace from eternity. It was first proclaimed to fallen man in the first promise, Gen. iii. 15. that 'the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent;' it was shadowed forth under the Old Testament by sacrifices, burnt-offerings, &c; the price was actually paid on the cross, when he 'made peace through the blood thereof,' Col. i. 20; and the powerful delivery is made in the conversion of the elect, the day of God's power, when the captives are delivered, their chains knocked off, and they are rescued from the miserable bondage in which they lay. And although Christ's blood was not actually shed under the Old Testament, yet the elect, during that dispensation were delivered by the same redemption which we are now partakers of, Heb. xi. 39, 40.

Thirdly, That Jesus Christ, and he only, is the Redeemer promised as the true Messiah, is evident, in that all the things that are the marks and characters of the Redeemer agree to him, and him only. He was to be of the tribe of Judah, and of the house of David, to be born of a virgin, to be Immanuel; God with us, God in our nature and on our side, to be born in Bethlehem, to make a mean appearance, to be despised and rejected of men, to be crucified on an accursed tree, to be buried in a grave, to rise again the third day, to ascend into heaven, and sit at the right hand of God, till his enemies be made his footstool. It is evident from comparing

the Old Testament with the New, that all these characters agree to Jesus Christ, and him only; and none other but one who possessed these characters could be our Redeemer.

II. Our next business is to illustrate this grand truth, That Jesus Christ, being the eternal Son of God, became man.

First, Christ is the eternal Son of God. And in this he differs from all God's other sons.

1. From angels, who are called 'the sons of God,' Job xxxviii. 7. They were filled with joy, and shouted with a triumphant voice, when they saw the power, wisdom and goodness of God, appearing so illustriously in the work of creation, when God laid the foundations of the earth. Now, the angels are called the sons of God.

(1.) Because they had their whole being from him. They are his sons by creation; in which sense also Adam is called 'the son of God,' Luke iii. 38.

(2.) Because of their great and mighty power. Hence they are styled 'principality, and power, and might, and dominion,' Eph. i. 21. They are like him in power and dignity.

(3.) Because they serve him as sons, cheerfully, willingly, and readily. They do not obey as slaves, or servants, or the best of servants; but they obey as children. They go his errands with a filial cheerfulness and delight. 'A son honoureth his father,' saith the Lord. It should be the temper and disposition of every son to do so. This is not only the disposition of angels, but they have actually done it, and may say unto God, as the elder brother is brought in saying in the parable, Luke xv. 'Lo these many years have we been with thee,' even ever since the creation of the world, 'and have never transgressed nor neglected thy commandments at any time.'

(4.) Because of the great privileges which God bestows upon them. He uses them as his sons and children. They are his courtiers, and near to his person, and always surround his throne, and behold his face. They are continually under the meridian beams of his ravishing and life-giving countenance.

(5.) Because of their likeness to God in essence. He is a spirit, an incorporeal and immaterial being, and angels are spiritual and incorporeal substances. Though the difference between God and them be as great as can be conceived, yet truly inconceivable; God being the creating spirit, and they

created spirits ; God being an infinite spirit, and they but finite ones ; yet the angels bear a resemblance to God in their essence, as well as in their qualifications, and may upon that account also be called the sons of God : but they are only the sons of God by creation : Whereas Christ is his Son by an eternal and ineffable generation. Christ alone is the Son of God by nature.

2. Believers are called the sons of God, John i. 12. And they are so by adoption and regeneration, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Believers differ from the angels in this ; for they do not stand in need of regeneration, or any gracious change to be wrought in them : for as they were created holy and pure beings, so they have continued in that integrity and holiness with which they were made, and have not lost it : and therefore Christ is no Redeemer to them.

3. Christ differs both from angels and saints in this, that he is the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, as the scripture verifies, Matth. iii. 17. and xvii. 5.

Now, that the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, is the eternal Son of God, or was begotten of the Father from all eternity, is clear from the holy scriptures ; for to divine revelation alone are we indebted for the knowledge of this important truth. To this end let us consider, Psal. ii. 7. 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' This passage is applied to Christ in several places of the New Testament. The word, 'this day,' doth not denote a certain time when this generation began, but is used to express the eternity thereof. And that which is eternal is expressed by that term, to shew and hold forth unto us, that all things past and to come are present with God in regard of his eternity. There is no succession in eternity, no yesterday nor to-morrow ; but it is all as one continued day or moment, without any succession or change. Therefore the generation of the Son being eternal, it is rightly designed by this term. And although in this and the following verses we have a declaration of God's decree and appointment concerning the advancement of Christ to his Mediatory throne and kingdom ; yet in this verse, the generation of the Son is not mentioned as a part of that decree, but only as the ground and foundation thereof. For unless Christ had been the Son of God by eternal generation, he could not have been our Mediator and Redeemer ; nor could he have obtained a throne and kingdom as such.

And this eternal generation of the Son was solemnly declared by his resurrection from the dead. This is the apostle's scope when he says, 'We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,' Acts xiii. 32, 33. He might well say, this scripture Psal. ii. 7. was fulfilled by the raising Christ from the dead, because by his resurrection the truth of it was openly proclaimed and declared to the world, as the same apostle tells us, Rom. i. 4.

We may argue for this likewise from Micah v. 2. 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.' This text is applied to Christ, Matth. ii. 6; and that it must be understood of him, and of no other, is plain, because he is promised as the King and Ruler of his church: and in the following verses there is ascribed unto him the calling of the Gentiles, invincible power and majesty in his providential dispensations, doctrine, and miracles, and an universal kingdom and government over Jews and Gentiles through the earth. Now, there is a twofold going forth here attributed to him. The first is external and visible, namely, his going forth from the city of Bethlehem, by being born of a virgin. This is a temporal generation, and is therefore spoken of as a thing to come, 'He shall come forth unto me.' But lest any should look on him as a mere man, and as one that began to be at his incarnation, therefore a second going forth is mentioned, which is internal and eternal: 'Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,' or 'from the days of eternity,' as it is in the original text. These words design his eternal generation, as being begotten of the Father from all eternity; for he could not go forth from the Father from everlasting but by generation.

This truth is further clear from Christ's being called *the Son of God*. He is often so designed in scripture. The Father did solemnly proclaim him to be so by an audible voice from heaven, both at his baptism and his transfiguration. He is the Son of God in a most proper and singular manner, viz. by the Father's communicating the divine essence to him by

eternal generation. This name given to Christ is more excellent than any name given to the angels, though they are also called the sons of God, Heb. i. 4, 5. 'For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?' He is so the Son of God, as on that account he is equal with the Father. Therefore, when he told the Jews, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' it is said, 'The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God,' John v. 17, 18. The Jews concluded from what he had said, that he made himself equal with God. And their conclusion was very just: for he did not find fault with them for so doing, nor charge them with reproaching him; nor doth he clear any mistake about it, as certainly he would have done, if they had been in any. Therefore what they conclude from his discourse is plainly asserted by the apostle, Phil. ii. 6. in these words, 'He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' So that Christ's scope and design, John v. is plainly to shew, that he was the Son of God in such a manner, that he was the same in substance with the Father, and equal with him in dignity and glory.

And as to the nature of this generation, our blessed Lord himself doth in some measure explain it to us, so far as we are capable to apprehend this great mystery, when he tells us, John v. 26. 'As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' So that to beget the Son, is to give to the Son to have life in himself, as the Father hath life in himself; which doth necessarily import a communication of the same individual essence. For to have life in himself was an essential attribute of God; *i. e.* to have life independently, of and from himself; and to be the source and fountain of life to all the creatures, is a perfection proper to God, inseparable from his nature, yea, the very same with his essence. And therefore the Father cannot give it, unless he give the essence itself: and he cannot give the essence by way of alienation, for then he himself would cease to be God; nor by way of participation, seeing the divine nature is one, and cannot be divided. Therefore it must be by way of communication. So that the generation of the Son is that eternal action of the Father, whereby he did communicate to the Son the same individual essence which he himself hath, that the Son might have it equal with him-

self. But as to the manner of this generation, or communication of the divine essence to the Son, it is altogether ineffable and inconceivable by us. It is simply impossible for poor weak worms, such as we are, to understand or explain wherein it consists. It is not natural, but supernatural, and wholly divine, and therefore incomprehensible by us. Yea, it is incomprehensible even by the angels themselves, who far excel men in intellectual abilities. We may justly hereunto apply what we have, Isa. liii. 8: 'Who shall declare his generation?' This whole mystery is incomprehensible by us: we ought humbly and reverently to adore what we cannot comprehend. There is a communication of the whole essence or Godhead from the Father to the Son, in receiving whereof the Son doth no more lessen and diminish the majesty or Godhead of the Father, than the light of one candle doth the light of another from which it is taken. Whereupon the council of Nice said well, that Christ is God of God, light of light, very God of very God, not proceeding but begotten. Hence it is clear, that he had a being before he was born of a virgin, yea from eternity; and that he is the true God, and the most high God, equal with the Father, Phil. ii. 6. John i. 1; for no being can be eternal but God.

Secondly, The Son of God became man: It was not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, that was incarnate, but the Son, John i. 14. 'The word was made flesh.' He was 'God manifested in the flesh,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. But though he was from eternity God, yet the world had lasted well nigh four thousand years ere he became man.

Thirdly, Why did it behove Christ, in order to be our Redeemer, to be God and man? he could not be our Redeemer, if he had not been both.

1. He behoved to be God, (1.) That he might be able to bear the weight of the infinite wrath of God due to the elect's sins, and come out from under that heavy load, Acts ii. 24. (2.) That his temporary sufferings might be of infinite value, and afford full satisfaction to the law and justice of God, Heb. ix. 14. In these respects none other but one who was God could redeem us.

2. He behoved to be man (1.) That he might be capable to suffer death, Heb. ii. 14. (2.) That the same nature which sinned might suffer, Ezek. xviii. 4. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' (3.) That he might be a merciful

High Priest, Heb. ii. 16, 17. and that we might have comfort and boldness of access to the throne of grace having an High Priest of our own nature as our Intercessor there.

III. I come now to prove, that Christ is God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person. Christ is God and man by a personal union of two natures. The two natures in Christ remain distinct: the Godhead was not changed into the manhood, nor the manhood into the Godhead: for the scripture speaks of these as distinct; Rom. i. 3. 1 Pet. iii. 18. Heb. ix. 14.; and of two wills in Christ, a human and a divine, Luke xxii. 42. These natures remain still with their distinct properties, that as the divine nature is not made finite, so neither is the human nature adorned with the divine attributes. It is not omnipotent, 2 Cor. xiii. 4; nor omnipresent; John xi. 15; nor omniscient, Mark xiii. 22: &c. Yet are they not divided; nor is Christ two persons; but one; even as our soul and body though distinct things; make but one person. This is clear from the text, which shews that the Son of God was made of a woman; which seeing it cannot be understood of his divine nature; but of the human, it is plain that both natures make but one person. And elsewhere he is described as one person consisting of two natures, Rom. i. 3: and ix. 5. And it was necessary that the natures should be distinct; because otherwise, either his Divinity would have advanced his humanity above the capacity of suffering, or his humanity depressed his Divinity below the capacity of meriting. And it was necessary that he should be one person; because otherwise his blood had not been the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. nor of the Son of God, 1 John i. 7. and so not of infinite value. Wherefore Christ took on him the human nature, but not a human person.

Lastly, Christ was, and so will continue God and man for ever. This union never was dissolved. He died in our flesh to save us; he rose again in it, and ascended to heaven in it; and will continue ever in it, Heb. vii. 24. It will be a part of the happiness of the saints after the resurrection, that they shall feed their eyes for ever in beholding the glorified body of the blessed Redeemer.

I shall finish this subject with a few inferences.

1. The redemption of the soul is precious. The salvation of sinners was a work greater than the making of the world. The powerful word commanded, and the universe sprung

up into being; but much more was to be done ere a sinner could be saved from wrath. The eternal Son of God must become man, lay aside the robes of his glory, and clothe himself with the infirmities of human nature; and in that nature purchase redemption by the price of his matchless blood for poor miserable prisoners, and deliver them from the pit of hell and wrath by an exertion of his almighty power.

2. See here the wonderful love and grace of God in sending his own Son to be the Redeemer of sinful men. It was he that contrived this method of redemption, in the adorable depths of his infinite wisdom. He pitched upon his own Son as the only fit person to set miserable captives free. He fitted and furnished him for this work, and sent him to the world with full power and authority to go about it. It was God the Father that was gracious to sinners, saying, 'Deliver them from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' What an illustrious display of the astonishing love and grace of God is it, that he should have remembered them in their low estate, and laid help upon one that is mighty to save them. To enlarge upon this a little further, I offer a twofold consideration.

(1.) Who he was that was sent and came into the world to redeem the elect; not an angel or archangel, nor any of the glorious seraphims that stand about God's throne. Indeed, if it had been so, divine love, even in this, had infinitely advanced itself; that God should be pleased to spare one of his own retinue from attending on him, and give such a glorious servant as an angel is, for the redemption of such a rebellious and miserable worm as man. But O! how may it raise and heighten our admiration, when we consider that it was not an angel, if he had been capable for the mighty task, but the Lord of angels, not a servant but a Son, that the Father plucked from his own bosom, and sent upon this business! He spoke to him as it were to this purpose: 'Go, haste thee down to the earth; for there are thousands of miserable creatures sinning themselves down to hell, and must for ever fall under the strokes of my dreadful and incensed justice; step thou in between them and it, and receive the blows thyself; die thou under the hand of vindictive justice; that they may be saved and live.' When God tried Abraham's obedience, he aggravates his command by many piercing words, which must needs tenderly touch, and great-

ly affect; the heart of a compassionate father, Gen. xlii. 2. 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering,' &c. It greatly heightened Abraham's obedience, that notwithstanding of all aggravations, yet he was willing to sacrifice his beloved Son upon God's command. Just so here God heightens and sets forth his matchless love towards us. He takes his own Son, his only Son, the Son of his eternal delight and love, and cheerfully offers him up as a sacrifice for the sins of men. This is the greatest instance of the love of God that ever was given.

(2.) God's love is exalted here, in that he freely sent his only begotten Son to be the Redeemer of an elect world. He was God's free gift, or else he could never have been obtained. If devils and men had joined their forces, and combined all their strength and power, and thus made an assault upon heaven, yet they could never have plucked the Son of God's love from his eternal embraces. God gave Christ freely to redeem a sinful world, not only without, but against all merit and desert in them, nay, unasked and unsolicited to do so. From all eternity God foresaw that they would despise and reject his Son, so that they would shed his precious blood, and then trample it under their feet, as an unholy thing; yet such was the height of his astonishing love, that he bestowed him freely upon them.

(3.) See the matchless love of the Son of God to poor sinners. It was love that induced him to substitute himself in their room, and to undertake to pay their ransom. He ² loved me (says Paul), and gave himself for me,' Gal. ii. 20. His love in this, as the apostle speaks, passeth knowledge. How cheerfully did he engage to make his soul an offering for sin, that thereby he might pay their ransom! Though he knew the difficulty of the work, and the greatness of that wrath which he was to bear, yet he cheerfully complied with the first motion of it that was made unto him by the Father. He knew very well, what a vast burden of sin was to be laid on his back, and the dreadfulfulness of that wrath he was to undergo; yet he did not shrink from the imputation of the one, or from the suffering of the other. He was willing to be reproached, that we might be glorified; to become poor, that we might be made rich; to

he accused and condemned, that we might be justified; to enter into prison, that we might go free; and to die a cursed and ignominious death, that we might live, and reign in honour for ever. O how great was his love to poor sinful men!

4. All who live and die out of Christ must perish; for there is no other Mediator between God and men but the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for sinners, and invites sinners to come and take the benefit thereof. Now, if men will not come unto him, that they may have life, their blood must be on their own heads. Christ is the only ordinance of God for life and salvation, and if men will slight and despise this ordinance, they must perish in their sins; for there is no other way of being saved but by him. If sinners will not enter by this door in time, the door of heaven will be shut against them for ever.

5. How highly is our nature exalted and dignified in the person of the Lord Jesus! He took not on him the nature of angels, a nature far superior to the human, but the seed of Abraham, and united it to his divine person. In that nature he performed his whole Mediatory undertaking, and wears it in his exalted state. It is corrupt in the multitude of those that partake of it, yet it is pure and spotless in Christ the Redeemer. Man's nature became so depraved and abominable by Adam's transgression, that it could never again appear before God; but in Christ it is so perfectly pure, that it was capable of an immediate union with the Godhead in his person. Though it be low and mean in itself, yet it is highly honoured and exalted in its union with the Son of God; and shall be the object of the delightful sight and admiration of the redeemed from among men through eternal ages.

6. It is impious and absurd to ascribe any part of man's redemption to any other. In the close of his sufferings on the cross, he cried with a loud voice, 'It is finished,' and gave up the ghost; intimating, that he had then perfected and completely finished the great work of redemption committed to and undertaken by him. It is therefore dishonourable to Christ, and dangerous for men, to join any thing of their own to his righteousness, in point of justification before God. The blessed Redeemer will never endure it. It reflects upon his Mediatory undertaking. If he be the only Redeemer of

God's elect, then certainly there can be no other. If he hath finished that work, then there is no need of our additions. And if that work be not finished by him, how can it be finished by men? It is simply impossible for any creature to finish that which Christ himself could not. But men would fain be sharing with him in this honour, which he will never endure. He is the only Saviour of sinners; and he will never divide the glory of it with us. Men would fain have something of their own to atone offended justice. There is a legal strain, a strong tang of the first covenant, running in the hearts of all men by nature. We would do something for ourselves, and are unwilling to be obliged to another for our deliverance from that wretched condition that sin hath brought us into. 'What good thing shall I do (said the young man in the gospel) that I may have eternal life.' But all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. Though your heads were waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears, and you should weep day and night continually; nay, though you should weep tears of blood, all would be in vain; for it could not cleanse you from the guilt and pollution of the least sin. To depend upon any thing that ever he did, or can possibly do, is but like the setting up of a paper-wall to keep off a devouring fire: for it cannot screen you from the consuming flames of God's wrath and fiery indignation. 'By the works of the law (says the apostle), no flesh can be justified.'

7. *Lastly*, If ye would be delivered from the state of sin and misery into which ye are brought by your fall in the first Adam, come unto and accept of the Lord Jesus Christ as your Redeemer. God has laid help for you upon this mighty One, who is both able and willing to save all that come unto God by him. Close with him by faith, and you shall be redeemed from the guilt of sin, have its power subdued in you, and at last be delivered from the inbeing of it, and from all the penal consequences and effects thereof. He is now saying, Behold me, behold me; O do not refuse him, lest ye perish for ever.

OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION.

LUKE i. 35.—*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

THESE words are the angel's answer to Mary, who, understanding the angel as speaking of a thing presently to be done before Joseph and she should come together, desires to know how she, being a virgin, should conceive, Here,

1. The angel tells her how she should 'conceive and bring forth a Son,' namely by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the power of the Highest, the Spirit of God being the true God, and so the Highest. The author of this conception is the Holy Ghost, not to exclude the Father and the Son, who also concurred to this work, as to all works without God himself; and besides the power of all the three persons is one. But it is appropriated to the Spirit, as creation to the Father, and redemption to the Son, so the consummation of all things to the Spirit. The way of the Spirit's powerful working to this miraculous conception is denoted by two words. One is, that *the Holy Ghost should come upon her*, not in an ordinary way, as in the conception of all men Job x. 8. 'Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about;' but in an extraordinary way, as on the prophets, and those that were raised to some extraordinary work. The other is, that *the power of the Highest*, which is infinite power, *should overshadow her*, to wit, make her, though a virgin, to conceive by virtue of the efficacy of infinite power, by which the world was created, when the same Spirit moved on the waters, cherished them, and framed the world. I shall say no more of this, seeing the Holy Spirit did overshadow or cast a cloud over the virgin in this operation, that men might not pry curiously into this mystery.

2. He shews what should follow on this miraculous conception, namely, that the fruit of her womb, the child she should bear, should be called *the Son of God*. Where the angel teaches two things. (1.) The immaculate sinless conception of the child Jesus, *that holy thing*, a holy thing though proceeding from a sinful creature, not tainted with sin, as all

other children are. Job asks, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' and answers, 'Not one.' But though this be impossible with men, yet it is possible with God, whose infinite power can do every thing. The powerful operation of the divine Spirit sanctified that part of the virgin's body of which the human nature of Christ was formed, so that by that influence it was separated from all impurity and defilement. So that, though it proceeded from a creature infected with original sin, there was no sin or taint of impurity in it. This was a glorious instance of the power of the Highest. (2.) He tells the virgin, that therefore, seeing that child to be thus conceived, he should be *called*, that is, owned to be, *the Son of God*. He says not, Therefore that holy thing shall be the Son of God, for he was the Son of God before, by virtue of his eternal generation; but, Therefore he shall be *called*, i. e. owned to be really so, and more than a man. The reason of this is, because Isaiah had prophesied that the Son of God should be the Son of a virgin. When therefore you, a virgin, shall conceive, your child shall be acknowledged to be the Son of God in man's nature. Matth. i. 22, 23. 'Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us.' He was promised to the church as the Messiah, 'a child born unto us, a son given unto us.' Isa. ix. 6. And he actually was so, Luke ii. 11.

Doct. 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

- I. Who she was that was the mother of Christ as man.
 - II. What we are to understand by his becoming man.
 - III. That he was true man.
 - IV. What we are to understand by his being conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary.
 - V. Why he was born of a virgin.
 - VI. Make application in a few inferences.
- I. I am to shew who she was that was the mother of Christ as man. Christ as God had no mother, and as man no fa-

her. But his mother as man was Mary. She was the seed of Abraham; and so Christ was that seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed, Gal. iii. 16. She was of the tribe of Judah, Luke iii. 39. and of that tribe Christ by her did spring, Heb. vii. 14. She was also of the family of David, as appears by her genealogy, Luke iii. and therefore Christ is called the Son of David, as the Messiah behoved to be. She was, however, but a mean woman, the family of David being then reduced to a low outward condition in the world, having long before lost its flourishing state; so that our Lord 'sprung up as a root out of a dry ground,' Isa. xi. 1. and liii. 2. She was a virgin before and at the time of her bringing forth Jesus, but espoused to Joseph, who was of the same tribe with her. What she was after, I think Christians should raise no question about that matter, seeing the scripture has buried it in silence. And therefore, as they are presumptuous who would always make her being a virgin an article of faith, so they are rash that would define the contrary. For they are but little versed in the scripture, who know not that kinsmen among the Jews are ordinarily in sacred writ called *brethren*; as Abraham and Lot, his brother's son, are called *brethren*, Gen. xiii. 8. So no argument can be drawn from persons being designed *the brethren of Christ*, in the evangelists, to prove that Mary bore children to Joseph.

II. I come to shew what we are to understand by Christ's becoming man. It implies,

1. That he had a real being and existence before his incarnation. He truly was before he was conceived in the womb of the virgin, and distinct from that being which was conceived in her. He tells us himself, that he was in heaven before he ascended thither: 'What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' John vi. 62. Yea, he was with his father from all eternity, before any of the creatures come out of the womb of nothing. So Prov. viii. 29, 30, 'When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.' Here the Spirit of God describes the most blessed state of Jesus Christ, from those eternal delights which he had had with his Father before his assumption of our nature, 'Then was I by him,' or 'with him:' he was

so with him as never any other was, even in his very bosom, John i. 18. 'The word was with God,' ver. 1. And he calls himself 'the bread of life that came down from heaven,' chap. vi. ver. 33. Here he opposeth himself to the manna, wherewith God fed the Israelites in the wilderness, which never was really in heaven, nor had its original from thence. 'Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but the Father gave you Christ really from thence,' John xvi. 28. 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.' He is called 'Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.'

2. That he actually took upon him our nature. He assumed the entire nature of man into the unity of his divine person, with all its integral parts and essential properties; and so was made or became a real and true man by that assumption. Hence it is said, John i. 14. 'The Word was made flesh.' But though Jesus Christ had two natures, yet not two persons, which was the error of Nestorius, who lived in the fourth century. He so rent the natures of Christ asunder, as to make two distinct persons of them, and consequently two Christs, of which one was crucified at Jerusalem, and the other not, as he blasphemously alleged; and so he plainly denied the hypostatical union of the divine and human natures in the person of our blessed Redeemer. But though Christ had two natures, yet but one person: for his human nature never subsisted separately and distinctly by any personal subsistence of its own, as it is in all other men; but, from the first moment of his conception, it subsisted in union with the second person of the adorable Trinity. Again, though 'the Word was made flesh,' yet it was without any confusion of the natures, or change of the one into the other: which was the heresy of the Eutychians of old, who so confounded the two natures in the person of Christ, that they denied all distinction between them. Eutyches thought that the union was so made in the natures of Christ, that the humanity was absorbed and wholly turned into the divine nature; so that, by that transubstantiation, the human nature had no longer being. To oppose this heresy, the ancient fathers did very fitly make use of the sacramental union between the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ, and thereby shewed that the human nature of Christ is no more really converted into the Divinity, and so ceaseth

to be the human nature, than the substance of the bread and wine is really converted into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, and thereby ceaseth to be both bread and wine. But by this union the human nature is so united with the Divinity, that each retains its own essential properties distinct. The properties of either nature are preserved entire. It is impossible that the majesty of the Divinity can receive any alteration; and it is as impossible that the meanness of the humanity can receive the impression of the Deity, so as to be changed into it, and a creature be metamorphosed into the Creator, and temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinite. As the soul and the body are united, and make one person; yet the soul is not changed into the perfections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul. There is a change indeed made in the humanity; by its being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the Deity; as a change is made in the air when it is enlightened by the sun; not in the sun which communicates that brightness to the air. Athanasius makes the burning bush to be a type of Christ's incarnation; the fire signifying the divine nature; and the bush the human. The bush is a branch springing from the earth; and the fire descends from heaven. As the bush was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into the fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of fire shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire: So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it: but they are so united, that the properties of both remain firm: two are so become one, that they remain two still; one person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the Divinity, and the weakness of the humanity. The fulness of the God-head dwells bodily in Christ.

3. Christ's becoming man implies the voluntariness of this act of his in assuming the human nature. When he was so-lacing himself in the bosom of the Father with the sweetest pleasures that heaven could afford, yet even then the very prospect of his incarnation afforded him unspeakable delight, Prov. viii. 31. 'Rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth, and my delights were the sons of men.' See what is said, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not

desire, mine ears hast thou opened : burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me : I delight to do thy will; O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.' And when he was in the world, and had endured many abuses and injuries from sinners, and contradictions of them against himself, and was even come to the most difficult part of his work, yet even then he could say, 'How am I straitened (or pained) until it be accomplished?' Luke xii. 50. He longed to have the work of Redemption finished, for which he had assumed the human nature, that thereby he might be fitted and qualified for suffering. He cheerfully assumed our nature, that so he might be capable to suffer, and thereby satisfy offended justice for his people's sins. He was not forced or constrained to become man, but he willingly laid aside the robes of his Divinity, and cloathed himself with the infirmities of the flesh. Yea, if he had not willingly engaged to take on our nature, and die for our sins, divine justice could not have accepted of his blood as the price of our redemption.

III. I proceed to shew, that Christ was true man. Being the eternal Son of God, he became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul. He had the same human nature which is common to all men, sin only excepted. He is called in scripture 'man,' and 'the Son of man, the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Son of David,' &c; which designations could not have been given unto him, if he had not been true man. And it is said, Heb. ii. 14. 15, 16. 'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.' And so he became not an angel, but a man. As man consists of two essential parts, body and soul; so did Christ. He had a real body of flesh, blood, and bones, not a fantastical body, which is only a body in appearance. Hence he said to his affrighted disciples, when they thought they had seen a spirit when he first appeared to them after the resurrection, 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: Handle me and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have,' Luke

xxiv. 39. He was born with a body which was prepared for him, of the same appearance with those of other infants. He increased in stature, and grew up by degrees; and was so far from being sustained without the ordinary nourishment wherewith our bodies are preserved, that he was observed by his enemies to come eating and drinking; and when he did not so, he suffered hunger and thirst. The thorns that pricked the sacred temples of his head, the nails which penetrated through his hands and his feet, and the spear that pierced his blessed side, gave sufficient proof and testimony of the natural tenderness and frailty of his flesh.—The actions and passions of his life shew that he had true flesh. He was hungry, thirsty, weary, faint, &c. As therefore we believe that Christ came into the world, so we must own that he came in the verity of our human nature, even in true and proper flesh. With this determinate expression it was always necessary to acknowledge him. For ‘every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God,’ 1 John iv, 2, 3. This spirit appeared very early in the Christian church, in opposition to the apostolical doctrine: and Christ, who is both God and man, was as soon denied to be man as God. Simon Magus, the arch-heretic, first began, and many after followed him. And as Christ had a true body, so he had also a rational soul. For certainly, if the Son of God would stoop so low as to take upon him our frail flesh, he would not omit the nobler part, the soul, without which he could not be man. We are told that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, the one in respect of his body, the other in respect of his soul. Wisdom belongeth not to the flesh, nor can the knowledge of God, which is infinite, admit of an increase or addition. He then, whose knowledge did improve together with his years, must have a subject proper for, and capable of it, which was no other than a human soul. This was the seat of his finite understanding and directed will, distinct from the will of his Father, and consequently that of his divine nature; as appears by that known submission with respect to his drinking the cup of divine wrath: ‘Not my will but thine be done,’ says he. This was the subject of those affections and passions which so manifestly appeared in the course of his life, and particularly when he breathed forth that lan-

guage, when entering upon his last sufferings, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.' This was it which on the cross, immediately before his departure, he committed to his Father's care, Luke xxiii. 46. 'Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit.' And as his death was nothing else but the separation of his soul from his body, so the life of Christ, as man, consisted in the vital union and conjunction of that soul with the body. So that he who was perfect God was also perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Which is to be observed, and asserted against the ancient heretics, who taught that Christ assumed human flesh; but the Word, or his Divinity, was unto that body in place of a soul. As he could not have been real man without a real body and reasonable soul, which are the two essential and constituent parts of man, so he could not have borne the punishment of his people's sins, if he had not suffered in both. They had forfeited both soul and body to divine justice, and should have suffered in both for ever in hell; and therefore Christ, when he substituted himself in their room, suffered both in his body and in his soul. The sufferings of his body were indeed very great; it was filled with exquisite torture and pain; but his soul sufferings were much greater, as I observed in a former discourse.

IV. I come now to shew what we are to understand by Christ's being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This is a great mystery, beyond the reach and comprehension of a finite mind. The conception of our blessed Saviour was miraculous and supernatural, above the methods of nature. To open this a little, three things are to be considered here.

1. The framing of Christ's human nature in the womb of the virgin.
2. The sanctifying of it.
3. The personal union of the manhood with the God-head.

First, Let us Consider the framing of the human nature of Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary. In the text the act is expressed to be the effect of the infinite power of God. And it sets forth the supernatural manner of forming the humanity of our blessed Saviour. *The holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, and by an act of creative power frame the humanity of Christ,*

and unite it to the Divinity. In the framing of Christ's manhood, we are to consider the matter and the manner of it. The matter of his body was of the very flesh and blood of the virgin, otherwise he could not have been the Son of David, of Abraham, and Adam, according to the flesh. Indeed God might have created his body out of nothing, or have formed it of the dust of the ground, as he did the body of Adam, our original Progenitor: but had he been thus extraordinarily formed, and not propagated from Adam, though he had been a man like one of us, yet he would not have been of kin to us; because it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common parent of us all. It was therefore requisite to an affinity with us, not only that he should have the same human nature, but that it should flow from the same principle, and be propagated to him. And thus he is of the same nature that sinned, and so what he did and suffered may be imputed to us. Whereas, if he had been created as Adam was, it could not have been claimed in a legal and judicial way. Now, the Holy Ghost prepared the matter of Christ's body of the substance of the virgin; and he formed it of the matter thus prepared. Hence says Christ, 'A body hast thou prepared me,' Heb. x. 5. And says the apostle, Gal. iv. 4. 'God sent forth his Son made of a woman.' The Holy Ghost sanctified that part of the virgin's substance whereof the body of Christ was to be formed, purging it from all sin and taint of impurity. For though a man cannot, yet God can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, and endue it with a capacity for the generation of a human body, which otherwise it would not have had alone. Though Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin, yet we are not to think that he was made of the substance of the Holy Ghost, whose essence cannot be at all made. The Holy Ghost did not beget him by any communication of his essence; and therefore he is not the Father of Christ, though he was conceived by his power. The Holy Ghost did not minister any matter unto Christ from his own substance. Hence Basil says, Christ was conceived, not of the substance, but by the power, not by any generation, but by appointment and benediction of the Holy Ghost. And as for his soul, it was not derived from the soul of the virgin, as a part thereof; for spiritual substances are indivisible and impartible; and nothing can

be cut off from them. But it was created and made of nothing by the divine power, as all other souls are. Hence God is called 'the Father of spirits,' Heb. xii. 9. and is said to 'form the spirit of man within him,' Zech. xii. 1. Here the forming of the soul of man is joined with these two glorious effects of God's creative power, the expansion of the heavens, and laying the foundations of the earth. Our Saviour's spirit was created by God, and infused into his body, when fitly organized to receive it. Again, the manner of framing the human nature of Christ is also to be considered; and that was extraordinary and miraculous, not by generation according to the ordinary and stated course of nature, but by an extraordinary operation of the Holy Ghost above the laws of nature: and for this cause it exceeds the compass of human reason, and the highest reach of created understandings, either to conceive or express the order and manner of his conception.

Secondly, Let us consider the sanctifying of Christ's human nature. I have already said, that that part of the flesh of the virgin, whereof the human nature of Christ was made, was purified and refined from all corruption by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, as a skilful workman separates the dross from the gold. Our Saviour was therefore called *that holy thing*, Luke i. 35. Now, this sanctification of the human nature of Christ was necessary.

1. To fit it for personal union with the Word, who, out of his infinite love, humbled himself to become flesh, and at the same time out of his infinite purity, could not defile himself by becoming sinful flesh.

2. With respect to the end of his incarnation, even the redemption and salvation of lost sinners; that as the first Adam was the fountain of our impurity, so the second Adam should also be the pure fountain of our righteousness. God 'sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh;' which he could not have condemned, had he been sent in sinful flesh. The Father 'made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' which we could never have been made, if he had been tainted with any sin. He that needed redemption himself could never have purchased redemption for us.

Thirdly, We are to consider the personal union of the

manhood with the Godhead. To clear this a little, you would know,

1. That when Christ assumed our nature, it was not united consubstantially, so as the three persons in the Godhead are united among themselves; they all have but one and the same nature and will: but in Christ there are two distinct natures and wills, though but one person.

2. They are not united physically, as the soul and body are united in a man: For death actually dissolves that union; but this is indissoluble. So that when his soul was expired, and his body interred, both soul and body were still united to the second person as much as ever.

3. Nor yet is this such a mystical union as is between Christ and believers. Indeed this is a glorious union. But though believers are said to be in Christ, and Christ in them, yet they are not one person with him.

But more positively, this assumption of which I speak is that whereby the second person in the glorious Godhead did take the human nature into a personal union with himself, by virtue whereof the manhood subsists in the second person; yet without confusion; as I shewed already, both making but one person Immanuel, God with us. So that though there be a twofold nature in Christ, yet not a double person. For the human nature of Christ never subsisted separately and distinctly by any personal subsistence of its own, as it doth in all other men; but from the first moment of conception subsisted in union with the second person of the adorable Trinity, in a miraculous and extraordinary manner, being supernaturally framed within the womb of the virgin by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. Again, as it was produced miraculously, so it was assumed integrally; that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect soul and body, with all and every faculty and member pertaining to it. And this was necessary, that thereby he might heal the whole nature of the disease and leprosy of sin, which had seized upon and wofully infected every member and faculty of man. Christ assumed all, to sanctify all. He designed a perfect recovery by sanctifying us wholly in soul, body, and spirit: and therefore he assumed the whole in order to it. Again, he assumed our nature with all its sinless infirmities: therefore it is said of him, Heb. ii. 17. 'In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.' But here we are

to distinguish between personal and natural infirmities. Personal infirmities are such as befall particular persons, from particular causes, as dumbness, deafness, blindness, lameness, leprosies, &c. Now, it was no way necessary that Christ should assume these; but the natural ones, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, sweating, bleeding, mortality, &c. These he was subject unto, which, though they are not in themselves formally and intrinsically sinful, yet they are the effects and consequents of sin. They are so many marks and stains that sin hath left of itself upon our natures; and upon that account Christ is said to 'be sent in the likeness of sinful flesh,' Rom. viii. 3. Again, the human nature is so united with the divine, that each nature still retains its own essential properties distinct. And this distinction is not, nor can be lost by that union. The humanity was indeed changed by a communication of excellent gifts from the divine nature; but not by being brought into an equality with it: for it was impossible that a creature should become equal to the Creator. He took upon him the form of a servant, but he lost not the form of God. He despoiled not himself of the perfections of the Deity, by taking upon him the humanity. The glory of his Divinity was not extinguished nor diminished, though it was eclipsed and obscured under the veil of our humanity; but there was no more change in the hiding of it, than there is in the body of the sun, when he is shadowed by the interposition of a cloud. And this union of the two natures in Christ is an inseparable union; so that from the first moment thereof, there never was, nor to all eternity shall there ever be any separation of them.

Quest. But how did this union remain between them, when Christ's human soul and body were separated from each other upon the cross? *Ans.* Though the natural union between his soul and body was dissolved by death for a time, yet the hypostatical union between his divine and human nature remained as entire and firm as ever. For though his soul and body were divided from each other, yet neither of them were separated from the divine nature, but still subsisted as they did before, by the subsistence of the second person of the Trinity. And though Christ cried upon the cross with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' yet that did not imply a dissolution of that union: for if that dereliction should signify a dissolution of the former

union of his natures, the separation had been made in his life, and not at his death; for he made this dolorous complaint before he gave up the ghost. But these words infer no more, but that he was bereft of such joy and comfort from the Deity, as should allay and mitigate the bitterness of his present troubles. And therefore, when our Saviour yielded up the ghost, he suffered only an external violence; and what was subject to such corporeal force did yield unto these dolorous impressions: and the imbecility and frailty of our nature being such, that life cannot subsist long in exquisite torments, the disposition of his body failed the soul, and the soul deserted his body. But because no power hath force against omnipotence, nor could any finite agent work upon the union made with the Word, therefore that did still remain entire, both as to the soul and to the body.

V. I now proceed to shew, why Christ was born of a virgin. That Christ was to be born of a virgin, was prophesied and foretold many ages before his incarnation, as Isa. vii. 14: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' Now, that the mother of Jesus was that virgin spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, is evident from the testimony of the evangelists, particularly Mat. i. 18, &c. It was not convenient that he should be born in the common order of father and mother; for if he had been so born, he would have been a natural son of Adam, and so represented by him in the covenant of works, and an heir of Adam's sin, as others are that are born by virtue of the blessing of marriage. By such a birth he had been polluted and defiled with sin: 'For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean;' Job xiv. 4. The Redeemer of the world behoved to be so born, as not to derive the stain of man's nature by his generation. For if he had been tainted with the least spot of our corruption, he had been incapable of being a Redeemer: he could never have redeemed others who stood in need of redemption himself. And although God by his almighty power, had perfectly sanctified an earthly father and mother from all original spot and taint, that so the human nature might have been transmitted immaculate to him, as well as the Holy Ghost did purge that part of the flesh of the virgin of which the body of Christ was made, yet it was not convenient, that that person, who was God blessed for ever, as well as man, in partaking of our

nature, should have a conception in the same manner with ours, but different from it, and in some measure conformable to the infinite dignity of his person; which could not have been, had not a supernatural and a divine person been concerned as an active principle in it. Besides, such a birth had not been agreeable to the first promise, which calls him the seed of the woman, not of the man; and so the truth and veracity of God had suffered some detriment by it. The seed of the woman only is set in opposition to the seed of the serpent. By his being born of a virgin, the holiness of his nature is effectually secured. This exempted him from the stain and pollution of Adam's sin, which his nature wholly escaped, in that he received it not as all others do, in the way of ordinary generation, wherein original sin is propagated: but this being extraordinarily produced, was a most pure and holy thing. Christ was an extraordinary person, and another Adam; and therefore it was necessary he should be produced a new way. At first Adam was produced neither of man nor woman; Eve of a man without a woman; all others of a man and a woman. The fourth way remained, viz. of a woman without a man; and so Christ was born. And the wisdom of God appeared in that he was born of a virgin espoused; for thereby the reproach of illegitimacy was warded off; he had Joseph to take care of him in his infancy; his mother's good name and life were preserved from the malicious Jews; and our faith was the more confirmed by Joseph's testimony concerning Mary.

Thus we may be thoroughly satisfied,

1. That Christ had a true human body; and that though he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, he had not the likeness of flesh, but true flesh, Luke xxiv. 39. Heb. ii. 14.

2. That he had a reasonable soul, which was a created spirit, and that the divine nature was not instead of a soul to him. When he died, he commended his spirit to God, Luke xxiii. 46. There is in him a created and an uncreated understanding and will, Mark xiii. 32. Luke xxii. 42. Thus he was true man, consisting of soul and body. And the human nature being united to the divine, there were great gifts of holiness, wisdom, &c. in the human nature of Christ, by virtue of this union, which yet were not infinite, Luke ii. 52.

3. That Christ's body was not made of any substance sent down from heaven, but of the substance of the virgin, Gal.

iv. 4. He was 'the seed of the woman,' Gen iii. 15. and the fruit of Mary's womb, Luke i. 42. otherwise he had not been our brother.

4. That the Holy Ghost cannot be called the Father of Christ, in regard his human nature was formed, not of his substance, but of that of the virgin by his power.

5. That though in the nativity of Christ there was nothing as to the way of it extraordinary, but he was at the ordinary time brought forth as others, Luke ii. 22, 23. and that as a general truth, 'A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come,' John xvi. 21. yet he was born without sin, being *that holy thing*. He could not have been our Redeemer, had he not been so. Heb. vii. 26, Neither could he have sinned, seeing the human nature was put beyond that capacity, by its union with the divine; and whatsoever Christ did or could do was the action of that person who was God, and so free from sin.

6. That the reason why Christ was born without sin, and the sin of Adam did not reach him, was because he came not of Adam by ordinary generation, not by the blessing of marriage, but by a special promise after the fall.

I shall conclude all with some inferences.

1. Jesus Christ is the true Messiah promised to Adam as the seed of the woman, to Abraham as his seed, the Shiloh mentioned by Jacob on his death bed, the Prophet spoken of by Moses to be raised from among the children of Israel, the Son of David, and the Son to be born of a virgin.

2. Behold the wonderful love of God the Father, who was content to degrade and abase his dear Son, in order to bring about the salvation of sinners. How astonishing is it, that he should send his only-begotten Son to assume our nature, and bear that dreadful wrath and punishment that we deserved?

3. See here the wonderful love and astonishing condescendency of the Son, to be born of a woman, in order that he might die in the room of sinners, O how low did he stoop and humble himself, in assuming human nature, with all its sinless infirmities, in being subject to his own law, exposed to all manner of injurious usage from wicked men, to the temptations of Satan, and at last suffering a shameful and ignominious death! What great love to sinners, and what unparalleled condescension was here?

4. See here the cure of our being conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. Christ was born of a woman for us, and he was born without sin for us, that the holiness of his nature might be imputed to us as a part of that righteousness which constitutes the condition of our justification before God. In him is a complete righteousness for our guilt, and a fountain for washing away our spiritual pollution.

5. Christ is sensibly touched with all the infirmities that attend our frail nature, and has pity and compassion upon his people under all their pressures and burdens. Hence the apostle says, Heb. ii. 17, 18. 'In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' How comfortable is it to believers to consider, that he who is their great High Priest in heaven, is clothed with their nature, to capacitate and qualify him to have compassion on them in all their troubles and distresses.

6. Let this encourage sinners to come unto him, that they may be united unto him by faith, and so partake of the blessings of his purchase. Come and enter into a marriage relation with him. Sin shall not stop the match, if ye be willing. He that could sanctify the virgin's substance to make it a sinless piece of flesh, can easily sanctify you. And he that united the human nature to his divine person, can also unite you to himself, so as ye shall never be separated from him.

OF CHRIST'S OFFICES IN GENERAL.

ZECH. vi. 13.—Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a Priest upon his throne.

HAVING shewn that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Redeemer of elect sinners, and that it was necessary he should be God and man in one person, to qualify him for his Mediatorial undertaking, I come now to speak of the offices which Christ executes as our Redeemer, from the text now read.

In the 11th verse of this chapter, there is a typical action

crowning Joshua the high priest with two crowns, which is applied and explained in the following verses as representing Christ in his offices, who has on his head many crowns. In the 12th verse, there is a prophecy of the incarnation of Christ, under the metaphor of a branch, as sprung from the family of David, and making but a mean appearance in the world, 'as a root out of a dry ground.' In the verse where our text lies, we have the offices which he was to execute as our Redeemer; which are three.

1. The office of a Prophet: *He shall build the temple of the Lord*; that is, his own church, whereof the temple was a type, by the word of the gospel, which it is his work to promulgate as a Prophet. For the church is 'built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,' and the revealer of those truths which the prophets and apostles taught.

2. The office of a Priest; namely to expiate the sins of his people, to purchase peace for them, and to manage their cause with God.

3. That of a King; for he has a *throne*, which denotes his kingly office. He is a *Priest upon his throne*, denoting the reward of his sufferings, and the high dignity he is advanced to in consequence of his humiliation and satisfactory sufferings. And he is represented as *sitting on his throne*, not a King in name only, or an inactive monarch, but exercising acts of jurisdiction and government. In him all the glory of these offices is to meet: and these offices he shall hold and exercise in spite of all opposition: *He shall sit and rule upon his throne*.

The text affords foundation for the following doctrine, viz.

Doctr. 'Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. The verity of these offices in Christ.

II. The necessity of his exercising them as our Redeemer.

III. When he did exercise these offices.

IV. *Lastly*, Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew the verity or reality of these offices in Christ. I say then, that Christ as our Redeemer is actually invested with these offices; he is truly a Prophet, a Priest,

and a King; and also that he executes them, that is, performs the functions of, or what belongs to these offices, This clearly appears,

1. From plain scripture testimony, (1.) To his having or being possessed of these offices.—He is a Prophet, that Prophet foretold by Moses, who was to be heard in all things that he should say; and of whom it is said, ‘That every soul that would not hear him, should be destroyed from among the people, Acts iii. 22, 23. which passage is applied to Jesus Christ by the apostle Peter, and can agree to none but him, who teacheth as never man taught, even with authority and power.—He is a Priest. So he is expressly called, Heb. v. 6. ‘Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec;’ and in several other places of that epistle, where the reality, nature, and end of his priesthood, are largely described.—He is a King: Psal. ii. 6. ‘Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.’ Psal. cx. 2. ‘Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.’ He has all the ensigns of royal authority. The ceremony of inauguration or appointing to his office, Psal. ii. 6. Heb. ‘I have anointed my King upon my holy hill of Zion;’ a crown, Psal. xxi. 3, a sword, Psal. xlv. 3; a sceptre, Psal. lxxv. 6; subjects, Luke i. 33. John i. 49. (2.) The scriptures bear witness to his executing these offices. Hence he says himself, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life,’ John xiv. 6. He is *the way* to life and happiness by his death; *the truth* in his word, the sum and substance of all revealed truth; and *the life* in his Spirit, quickening and preserving his people by his power. He ‘of God is made unto *his people* wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption;’ *wisdom* as a Prophet, *righteousness* as a Priest, and *sanctification and redemption* as a King.

2. We learn this also from his name *Christ*, or *Messiah*, which signifies *the anointed One*. I told you in a former discourse, that three sorts of persons used to be anointed under the law, viz. Prophets, 1 Kings xix. 16; priests, as Aaron, Exod. xxix. 7; and kings, as David and others. But all these offices meet in Christ, who was anointed for the execution of them. Hence he says himself, Isa. lxi. 1. ‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty

to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' He is anointed to *preach good tidings unto the meek*, as a Prophet; to *bind up the broken-hearted*, as a Priest; and to *proclaim liberty*, as a King. He was not anointed with material oil, as the prophets, priests, and kings, under the Old Testament dispensation were; but with the oil of the Spirit; 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me (says he), because the Lord hath anointed me.' And God is said to have 'anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows,' Psal. xlv. 7. Now, this unction signified, (1.) His being set apart to the Mediatory work, and to these offices: the Father 'sanctified him, and sent him into the world,' John x. 36. (2.) His being fully furnished with gifts and qualifications suitable to these offices, in respect of his human nature, to which the Spirit was given, not by measure, Isa. xi. 1, 2: &c. but in fulness, not of sufficiency only, but abundance, not the fulness of a vessel, but of a fountain, in order to communicate liberally unto his people, John i. 16. He was solemnly inaugurated to these offices at his baptism, Mat. iii. 17. at his transfiguration, Mat. xviii. 5. and at his exaltation, Acts ii. 36. And he was as solemnly called to these offices, Heb. v. 4, 5. 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: so also, Christ glorified not himself, to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.'

II. Let us next consider the necessity of his exercising these offices. Christ's incarnation and taking on him the work of our redemption was entirely voluntary, without the least shadow of co-action and compulsion; but seeing he was pleased out of his great kindness to us, to become our Redeemer, it was necessary for our salvation that he should execute all these three offices. This will be clear, if we,

1. Consider our misery by sin, ignorance, guilt, and bondage. We were ignorant of the way to come back to God again; and therefore Christ as our Prophet must teach us. We durst not look him in the face, being covered with guilt; and therefore Christ as a Priest must make atonement, and remove our guilt. We were in bondage to sin and Satan, and could not return to God, nor recover ourselves out of our thralldom; therefore Christ as a King delivers us, brings us back again, leading captivity captive. As a Pro-

phet he gives light to the blind, as a Priest he brings merit, and as a King power.

2. Consider the salvation which the elect were to be made partakers of. It behoved to be revealed unto them, seeing of themselves they could never discover it, being quite blind and ignorant; and therefore our Redeemer became a Prophet to reveal the things that concern our salvation unto us, and instruct us therein. It behoved to be purchased for sinners, who, being weak and unfit for any spiritual work, could never purchase it for themselves: therefore he became a Priest to purchase life and eternal redemption for us. It behoved to be applied by the power of his Spirit; for as sinners could not purchase salvation, far less could they apply it to themselves: therefore Christ became a King. The slaves could never have raised their ransom, nor known it after it was paid, far less before; and they were unwilling to come out of their bondage. And therefore it behoved our Redeemer to be invested with these three offices.

3. Consider Christ as Mediator of the covenant, who behoved to deal with both parties, in order to bring them together. God was offended with our sin and guilt; and therefore for us he behoved to be a Priest, to satisfy law and justice, and intercede for our pardon. We knew not what was in agitation between the Father and the Son; and therefore he behoved to be a revealer of that grace, and merciful contrivance. We were unwilling to deal with God; therefore he behoved, as a King, to bring us to submit and yield to his government. The benefits of the covenant he behoved to purchase, reveal, and administer.

4. Consider the work of conversion. The soul must be enlightened, by the conviction of the Prophet, to see its misery; and the suitableness of the remedy: upon the sight of its misery, the soul would despair, were not the blood of the Priest to sprinkle the conscience; and the will would never yield, if it felt not the power of his conquering sword.

5. Consider our daily necessities. Are we not every day in the dark about something? What should become of us, if we had not the great Prophet to go to for instruction and direction? We are every day contracting new guilt: what would be our case, if there were not a lasting merit and an abiding Advocate? Are we not always needing protection against our enemies? how then should we break through the

armies of hell, if our King were not on our head, to subdue them under us?

6. *Lastly*, Consider the promises, which are the stay and staff of the Christian's life, without which they could never bear up. Christ's offices are the source and spring of all these. How precious are the promises of illumination, guidance, direction, &c. to the blind and those who knew not the way? These flow from Christ's prophetic office. 'Behold, (says Jehovah), I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people,' Isa. lv. 4. How precious are the promises of peace, pardon, and reconciliation, to those who are disquieted with fears, with guilt and sin? These flow from his Priestly office. And the promises of protection and deliverance to captives flow from his Kingly office. All the promises are the purchase of the blood of Christ; and they are all yea and amen in him, and flow from and through him.

III. I come now to shew, when Christ did execute these offices. As he was the Redeemer of the church in all ages, so did he execute these offices in all ages of the church. In the Old Testament he was the great Prophet of the church; for it is said, John i. 18. 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' He brought the glad tidings of salvation unto sinners in all the discoveries thereof from the first gospel-promise until his manifestation in the flesh. And he not only reveals the things concerning salvation unto men, but teaches them, and gives men an understanding to apprehend and know them. He was a Prophet unto the church in the wilderness: Hence it is said, Exod. xxiii. 20. 'Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice.' And we read, that 'by the Spirit he went and preached unto the spirits in prison,' 1 Pet. iii. 19. that is, unto the sinners in the old world, by the ministry of Noah, who, not repenting, were then, at the time the apostle wrote, in the prison of hell. He was also their Priest, interceding, on the ground of his future sufferings, for his people. Of this we have a remarkable instance, Zech. i. 12. 'O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and

ten years?' And he was their King, the Captain of the Lord's host, who led and conducted them, delivered them from the Egyptian bondage, guided them through the howling wilderness, placed them in Canaan, instituted their whole religious worship and service, &c.

But more especially Christ executed these offices after his incarnation, and that in his twofold estate of humiliation and exaltation. These are his two estates, of which the apostle speaks, Phil. ii. 8, 9. 'Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.'

He was a prophet while on earth, and still is revealing by his Word and Spirit the will of God for the salvation of his people. The whole doctrine of the Bible was taught by him; and it is by him that all saving knowledge is communicated to this day, and will be to the end of time.

He was a Priest in his state of humiliation, as well as he is in his state of exaltation. He offered his sacrifice on the earth, and therefore was a Priest there. Hence saith the apostle, Eph. v. 2: 'Christ—hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.' Nor did he ascend into heaven, till by his sacrifice he had 'purged away our sins,' Heb. i. 3. And he continues an interceding Priest for ever, Heb. vii. 25.

He was also a King in his state of humiliation. He was born a King, Matth. ii. 2. went into Jerusalem as a King, in accomplishment of an ancient prophecy concerning him, Matth. xxi. 5. owned himself to be a King before Pilate, Matth. xxvii. 11. It was the Lord of glory that was crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 8. And he is now exalted to his throne, and is styled, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords,' and will reign till all his enemies be made his footstool, and all his subjects be brought home to glory.

Here it may be observed, that these three offices, which Christ executes, are not to be divided, especially when they are executed in a way that is effectual for the salvation of the subjects thereof. He may indeed objectively reveal the will of God, and give laws to his church, as a Prophet, without giving them the unction whereby those who are savingly taught of God know all things necessary to salvation: and he may execute his regal office, as a Judge, in inflicting heavy

judgments and calamities on his enemies, without subduing them to that obedience and subjection to him which is the privilege of real believers. Yet it is a certain truth, that wherever he executes one of these offices in a saving way, he executes them all. In this respect, though the offices are distinct, yet they are not divided. For whosoever is taught by him as a Prophet, so as to be made wise unto salvation, is redeemed unto God by his blood as a Priest, and is subdued by his power as a King, and made a willing subject to him : and all whose sins are expiated by him as a Priest, shall, in his own time, be savingly taught by him as a Prophet, and made his willing subjects as a King, in the day of his power.

A few inferences shall shut up this subject.

1. How great and how glorious is our Lord Jesus Christ, who was meet to bear all these offices at once, and exercise them at once, so as one does not mar or clash with another! He is glorious indeed in whom all the glory scattered amongst the typical persons is perfectly concentrated. If it was an honour to Melchizedec, to be both a priest and a king, and David to be both a king and a prophet ; how much more glorious is it for our divine Mediator to be a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, really possessed of these offices, and exercising them in their full extent, in a more efficacious manner than any person that was ever invested with any of them on earth!

2. Let this commend Christ unto you as a full and a suitable Saviour. There is no case a poor sinner can be in, but he will find the remedy of it in these offices of Christ. Art thou, O sinner, under spiritual darkness and ignorance? There is knowledge and instruction to be had from him. He is the light of the world and can give thee an understanding to know him that is true, he can give thee the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Art thou under guilt and condemnation, laden with sin that is like to sink thee to hell? There is righteousness in him as a Priest to remove thy guilt. He is the atonement and propitiation for sin. He saves from sin and wrath. Art thou a slave to sin and Satan? He is a King, who came to destroy the works of the devil : he can break the dominion of sin in thee, knock off thy fetters, and subdue all thy spiritual enemies.

3. Ye cannot take Christ, as a Redeemer, if ye take him not in all his offices. He offers himself to sinners no other way. And what God has joined together let no man put

asunder. Many pretend to take Christ as a Saviour to save them from hell and wrath, who do not hearken to him as a Prophet to teach them the saving knowledge of God, nor submit to his laws and commandments. How many call Christ their Lord, and yet do not the things that he saith? O the folly of the world, that reject Christ's teaching, saying, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways! O the stupidity of those who despise Christ as a Priest, and think to recommend themselves to the divine favour by their own works of righteousness, which they substitute in the room of his righteousness! O the madness of those who condemn Christ as a King, refusing to submit to his royal authority, and who spurn at his laws and government! And how foolish are the princes of the earth that will not suffer Christ to reign freely in their dominions, but encroach on his authority, and make laws opposite to and inconsistent with his!

4. Do ye receive Christ in all his offices, giving up yourselves to be taught by him as a Prophet, in all things relating to your salvation, renouncing your own knowledge and wisdom; to be justified by his righteousness, and washed in his blood, renouncing all your own righteousness as filthy rags, saying, 'in the Lord alone have I righteousness, and counting all things but loss and dung, that ye may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith;' and to be guided and conducted, ruled and governed by him as your Sovereign Lord and King, yielding a hearty and cheerful obedience to all his laws and commandments, and saying, 'Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.'

5. Employ this mighty Redeemer in all the offices where-with he is invested, and which as Mediator he exercises for the benefit of the ruined race of mankind. Ye have absolute need of him in all these offices. Ye are witless and foolish, and stand in need of his wisdom to guide and direct you; and ye are ignorant both of yourselves and of God, and so require saving knowledge and instruction. Ye are guilty and condemned sinners, nay, daily offenders, and so stand in need of pardon, nay, of continual pardons. Ye are weak, and have no strength to combat your spiritual adver-

aries, and so require the exertion of his mighty power as King of kings to cause you stand against your adversaries. If you knew yourselves, and were exercised to godliness, you would see the absolute necessity of all Christ's offices for your salvation, and would every day bless God for such a complete and all-sufficient Redeemer. O make use of him daily in all his glorious offices, and honour him by putting employment in his hand, as your Prophet, Priest, and King.

OF CHRIST'S PROPHETICAL OFFICE.

ACTS iii. 22—*A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren like unto me : him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.*

HAVING shewn that the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer, is invested with, and actually executes the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, I come now to speak of these offices distinctly ; and shall begin with his prophetical office, which is plainly asserted in the words now read,

Here the apostle Peter shews the Jews, Moses pointing to Christ as the great Prophet of the church. Moses had told the Israelites in the wilderness, Deut. xviii. 15. 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Propbet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto him ye shall hearken.' Peter tells the Jews, that this eminent Prophet was now come, and exhorts them to submit unto his instructions. In the words we have,

1. A description of Christ as to his prophetical office, *A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you.* Where

1st, Christ is described by his title, *a Prophet*, and that the Prince of all the Prophets, or the 'great,' or 'chief Shepherd,' as he is styled by the apostles. It belongs to a prophet, by virtue of his office, to expound the law, declare the will of God, and foretel things which are to come. All these meet in Christ our great Prophet in a singular and eminent manner.

2dly, He is here described by his type ; 'a Prophet like unto me,' says Moses ; who therein typified and prefigured Christ. But you may say, is it not said of Moses, Deut.

xxxiv. 10. 'There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.' I answer, It is true indeed of a mere man there never arose so great a prophet in Israel as Moses was, either in respect of his familiarity with God, or of the miracles which he wrought by the efficacy of the divine power. Moses, however, was but a servant, and Christ a Son : Moses was but a star to this Sun, and derived all his light and knowledge from him. All the prophets under the Old Testament, however eminent were but Stars, and borrowed all their light from the Sun of righteousness. Nevertheless there were several things wherein Christ was like to Moses; such as, Moses and Christ were both persecuted in their infancy, Moses was a deliverer from the temporal, but Christ from the spiritual Egypt, of which the former was a figure. But more particularly, Christ was like to Moses,

(1.) In this great intimacy and familiarity with God. It is said, *Exod. xxxiii. 11.* that 'the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.' He spake with Moses freely, familiarly, and immediately; not by an angel, in a dream or vision, as he did to other prophets. Now Christ was like Moses in this respect, and far excelled him in it; for he was intimate with God from all eternity, *Prov. viii. 30*; he was 'with God,' *John i. 1.* and lay in his bosom, knowing all his counsels and purposes.

(2.) Christ was like to Moses in the excellency of his ministration, and his great faithfulness in the discharge of it. It is said, *Heb. iii. 2.* 'He was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.' As the office of Moses extended to the whole house of God under the law, and to all the service of it; so did Christ's reach to the whole church of God, and to all the service of it under the gospel. As Moses was appointed of God to give out what he delivered; so was Christ appointed by his father to institute what he did institute, and abrogate what he did abrogate. As Moses was faithful to him that appointed him in all the matters of God's house, keeping back nothing that he was commanded to reveal; so was Christ faithful to the Father, who did appoint him in like manner; yea, Christ far excelled Moses, as the apostle shews, *Heb. iii. 3. 4.* 'For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour

than the House. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.'

(3.) Moses was a prophet that mediated between God and the people. He carried God's mind to them, and returned their mind to God, because they were not able to hear the voice of God immediately themselves, Deut. xviii. 16, 17. So Christ is a Mediator between God and man; he deals with God for man, and with man for God.

(4.) As Moses confirmed his doctrine by many miracles which he wrought in the presence of the people to their full conviction; so our great Prophet is like unto Moses in this also: for he wrought many mighty miracles in the view and face of the world, which could not be denied, and thereby confirmed the doctrine which he preached, and verified the divinity of his person and mission.

3dly, Christ is here described by his stock and lineage from which he sprung according to the flesh, 'A Prophet shall the Lord raise up of your brethren; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came,' says the apostle, Rom. ix. 5. He was an Israelite; and it is evident that he sprang from the tribe of Judah, Heb. vii. 14. He put great honour and dignity upon that people and nation by his nativity and descent from them.

2. There is a strict injunction given of obedience to this Prophet: 'Him shall ye hear in all things.' By *hearing*, in this place, we are to understand obedience: and this obedience is required to be given to this Prophet only, universally, and under great penalties. (1.) It is required to be given to him only; for so *him* in the text must be understood as exclusive of all others. It is true, we are commanded to obey the voice of his messengers and ministers, Heb. xiii. 17. but still it is Christ speaking by them to whom we are to pay our obedience: 'He that heareth you (says he); heareth me.' We are to obey them 'in the Lord,' i. e. commanding and forbidding in Christ's name and authority. (2.) This obedience must be given to him universally: 'Him shall ye hear in all things.' Whatever he enjoins must presently be complied with; his commands are to be obeyed, not disputed. It is true, a judgment of discretion is allowed to Christians, to judge whether it be the will of God or not. We must 'prove what is the holy, good, and acceptable will of the Lord,' Rom. xii. 2. And whenever his will is understood

and known, we have no liberty to chuse, but must conform ourselves to it, be the duty commanded ever so difficult, or the sin forbidden ever so pleasing and tempting. (3.) This obedience is required under a very severe penalty, even no less than being cut off and destroyed from among the people; and of God's requiring it at our hands, Deut. xviii. 19. Acts iii. 22. 'I will require it of him;' i. e. revenge myself in the destruction of the disobedient. This obligation laid on men to obey the great Prophet, is not a prediction; more than the commands, 'Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery,' &c.

The doctrine natively arising from the text is,

DOCT. 'Christ is a Prophet, and, as the Redeemer of his people, executes that office, in revealing to them, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for their salvation.'

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is implied in Christ's revealing the will of God for our salvation.

II. What is that will of God that Christ reveals.

III. How he reveals this will of God.

IV. For what ends he reveals the will of God, and the necessity of this revelation in order to our salvation.

V. *Lastly*, Make some improvement.

I. I am to shew what is implied in Christ's revealing the will of God for our salvation, wherein Christ's prophetical work lies. It implies,

1. That as it is God's determined will and purpose that some of mankind shall be saved, so he has laid down a certain way and method for their salvation; out of which none can be saved; and in which all that take it shall be saved.

2. That the discovery of this method of salvation was a secret of God that man could never have found out; John i. 18. It was a counsel in the breast of God, which, for man or angel, might for ever have lain hid.

3. That our Lord Jesus was intimately acquainted with this will of God, John i. 18. He was 'in the bosom of the Father.' He was privy to his eternal counsels, as being the eternal Son of God. And therefore he needed not be carried to heaven, to hear and learn from God what he was to teach ere he began to preach to the world, being 'God manifested in the flesh,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. Neither did he as

and unto heaven oftener than once, and that only after he had suffered, Heb. ix. 12.

4. That unto Jesus Christ we owe the discovery and revelation of the divine will. He is the fountain of all that light which points out the way to salvation, Isa. lv. 4. 'I have given him, (says the Lord), for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.' He is that true pillar of cloud that guides to the heavenly Canaan; and no beams of saving light shine on the world but from him, John iii. 19. and in the face of Jesus, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

II. I proceed to shew what is that will of God that Christ as a Prophet reveals. It is the will of God for the salvation of sinners, and that the whole will of God in all things concerning their edification and salvation. It is 'the word of his grace which is able to build them up,' Acts xx. 32. It is 'written, that ye might believe;—and that believing ye might have life.'

This may be reduced to two heads.

1. Faith. Man was broken off from God and his favour and fellowship. It was the will of God, that man should come and be re-united to him in the way of believing in a slain Redeemer. This Christ has revealed in the gospel. Therein he has laid open the mystery of reconciliation, as laid down betwixt the Father and him from eternity, in all the parts thereof, and this by his word and Spirit to teach his own children.

2. Obedience. Man, as he could not, so he knew not how to serve God acceptably. Christ has also fully discovered that point. And therefore we find him at his prophetical work, expounding the law, and vindicating it from the false glosses of the Pharisees, Matth. v. vi. vii. and every where not only shewing men what to do, but how to do it.

More particularly, as the will of God denotes all that God would have us to know, believe, and do, in order to our salvation; and as there are some things to be known as the foundation of our faith, some things to be believed, and some things to be done in point of duty, as the fruits and effects of true saving faith; so these particulars being the objects of Christ's teaching, I shall mention a few of them very briefly.

1. Christ makes known to us our original state, that holy and happy condition in which man was made; of which I gave you a specimen in the discourse concerning the creation

of man. Man was then a holy and happy creature, the peculiar favourite of heaven, and endued with choicer prerogatives than all the creatures in this lower world. It is necessary for us to know this, that we may not accuse God of that sin and disorder which now prevails in our constitution, and renders us objects of the divine abhorrence; and may be unwearied till we regain our forfeited felicity. This is a matter of pure revelation, and is accordingly taught us in the inspired volume.

2. Christ reveals to us our misery and wretchedness by the fall. This I also endeavoured to open up to you in the course of this work. Man, by sin, lost communion with God, fell under his wrath and curse, and is liable to temporal and eternal miseries. This miserable state, though also a matter of revelation, is well known to all the descendants of Adam, so that they feel it in their sad experience, and they have no need to be taught it. But Christ teaches his people this doctrine in a manner that the rest of the world are strangers to. And therefore,

3. Christ reveals to us our woful impotency and inability to help ourselves. This is the fatal consequence of the fall, and has been partly mentioned in the foregoing part of this work. 'O Israel, (says the Lord), thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help,' Hos. xiii. 9. which says, that though our ruin is of us, our help is not in us. Hence men in their natural state are said to be *without strength*, incapable to deliver themselves from the wretched state into which they are plunged by sin. Man is so deeply sunk in the horrible pit, that it passes the skill and ability of men or angels to pull him out. He cannot atone offended justice, or expiate his sin. This deplorable state of man is revealed in scripture, and savingly only to the elect, by the Saviour of sinners.

4. Christ reveals, as a Prophet, that there is a way found out, and a method laid down in the adorable depths of divine wisdom, whereby poor sinners may be delivered from sin and wrath, and obtain eternal salvation. For this discovery we are indebted to divine revelation. Of this I have spoke under the covenant of grace. And Christ, as a Prophet, teaches this article to his people so efficaciously, that they acquiesce in this method of salvation.

5. He reveals to us that he is a full and sufficient Saviour,

able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 25. So that his own people cordially embrace him as their only Saviour, and accept him as their sole Redeemer, looking for expiation of guilt, pardon of sin, and peace with God, only from and through him.

6. He teaches, that we must have union with him through faith, or else we can have no benefit by his blood, 1 John v. 12. 'He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life;' that is, he that is united to Christ is spiritually alive, and shall not enter into condemnation; but he that is not united to him is still under the curse, and the wrath of God abideth on him. It is by being in Christ, united to him, that we escape condemnation, Rom. viii. 1.

7. Christ teaches us, that we must believe in, and receive him as our only Saviour and Redeemer, resting upon him alone for life and salvation. Hence it is said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

8. Another part of the will of God that Christ reveals to us is *our sanctification*; and we are told, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Holiness of heart and life is absolutely necessary to qualify men for the enjoyment of God in heaven, as no unclean thing can enter the celestial abode.

III. I come now to shew how Christ reveals this will of God for salvation, namely, by his word and Spirit, jointly or together; for both are absolutely necessary for attaining that end.

First, Christ reveals his by his word. This is the external revelation of it, without the knowledge of which no man can be saved. The personal Word of God teaches us by his word written or preached, or extraordinarily revealed. So there are three ways of Christ's teaching by his word.

1. The word extraordinarily revealed as appears from Heb. i. 1. and Gen. iii. 15. which method having long ago ceased, we need not enlarge upon it.

2. By the word preached; which has been managed two ways, wherein the kindness of the Divine Teacher appears,

(1.) By his own personal preaching, Heb. i. 1. in the days of his flesh, when he went about the work of preaching the gospel to the Jews, for which cause he is called 'the minister of the circumcision,' Rom. xv. 8. putting a glory on the mi-

nisterial calling by himself performing that office. He spake as never man spake. An heavenly authority and majesty appeared in his preaching, which attracted the attention of his hearers, and forced them to acknowledge he was more than a human being.

2. By his ambassadors in his name. So he exercised his prophetical office.

[1.] Before his incarnation, under the Old Testament, 1 Pet. iii. 19. instructing his church sometimes by extraordinary teachers, the prophets; sometimes by ordinary teachers, or both. And this he did both before and after the word was written: for although before the scripture the church was supplied by extraordinary revelation, yet all were not so taught, but many were trained up by the external teaching of the patriarchs; as appears from Abraham's practice, Gen. xviii. 17, 19.

[2.] After his incarnation, by the apostles, who were infallibly guided, and to this day by ordinary ministers, by whom Christ still exercises his prophetical office, Eph. iv. 11. and so he promised to be with them, Mat. xxviii. ult. In this respect they have that awful hedge set about them, 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.' On this ground he obligeth people to repair to them for clearing, from the word, the matters of salvation, sin, and duty to them, Mal. ii. 7. 'They should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.'

3. By the word written, John xx. 31. 'These things are written, that ye might believe,' &c. Thereby it is that the prophets and apostles, and all the inspired writers, being dead, yet speak to us, and Christ by them, to shew us the will of God for our salvation. Thus was the church taught from the days of Moses, and in this manner it is taught to this day. We need not say, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' or 'who shall descend into the depths?' that is, for the revelation of the method of salvation. The word is nigh to us, it is among our hands. To that, Christ sends us to know his mind, Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony; yet not to juggle out men's teaching from it, Eph. iv. 11, 12.

Yet the word itself is not sufficient to teach us the will of God for our salvation. Not the word preached; for even

most of those who heard him that spake as never man spake, were not bettered by his preaching; as appears from John xii. 37, 38. 'But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Nor yet the word written, for the same reason; nor that extraordinarily revealed, as in the case of Balaam. See 1 Cor. ii. 14. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' There is a darkness over the minds of men which nothing but omnipotency can remove. Therefore,

Secondly, Christ teaches his elect, who are taught to salvation by his Spirit, who joins internal illumination to external revelation. 'He opened the understandings' of the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, 'that they might understand the scriptures,' Luke xxiv. 45. Thus all the elect are taught of God, and so come to Christ; and thus have they always been taught. Ye must not, however, understand these as two different ways of Christ's teaching to salvation, in those that are capable of both; for the word is that by which the Spirit teacheth still. These God has joined, Isa. lix. 21. 'As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.' John xvi. 13, 14. 'When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.' Thus the teaching of the elect is begun, and thus it continues to the end.

Indeed the word hath a mighty power and efficacy upon the hearts of men. It enlightens their mind, awakens their consciences, convinces of sin, and can effectually convert and changes them. But this is only when it is managed by the Spirit's hand. All its power and efficacy is from him. The virtue of the word is not from itself: it doth not work in a

physical way, as natural agents do, for then the effect would naturally follow, unless it were miraculously hindered. But this spiritual efficacy is in the word, as the healing virtue was in the pool of Bethesda, of which it is said, John v. 4. 'An angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water : whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.' This efficacious power is not naturally inherent in the word at all times, but only communicated to it at some special seasons. Many times the word is purely and plainly preached, but no gracious effect follows. It proves but like the beating of the air, which makes no impression upon it : none are awakened, convinced, or converted by it. Neither is the power of the word communicated to it by the instrument that manageth it ; for saith the apostle, 1. Cor. iii. 7. 'Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase.' Ministers are nothing, they have no power or strength of their own sufficient for such a purpose as this is. The apostle doth not mean here, that they are useless instruments, and altogether unnecessary, but that they are insufficient of themselves, to produce such mighty effects. It worketh not as it is the word of man, but as it is the word of God. Ministers may say of the ordinary, as Peter said of the extraordinary effects of the Spirit, Acts iii. 12. 'Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this ? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk.' All the power and efficacy of the word is derived from the Spirit of the Lord. It is said, 1 Thess. ii. 13, 'When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' When the word of God is set home by the Spirit, then it is mighty to enlighten the minds, convince the consciences ; and humble and break the hearts of sinners. Then it proves as a hammer to break the rock in pieces. And it is said, John xvi. 8. 'When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.' The word made use of there signifies conviction by such clear demonstration as compelleth assent. It not only convinceth men in general that they are sinners, but it convinceth them particularly of their own sins, and of all the heinous aggravations of them.

It sets sin before the eye of conscience in all its aggravating circumstances and fearful consequences, as committed against the holy and righteous law of God; clear light, regrets and checks of conscience, manifold mercies and favours, God's long suffering, Christ's precious blood, many warnings of judgments, the reward and wages whereof, by the verdict of a man's own conscience, is death, even eternal death and damnation.

It may not be improper here to touch at the excellency of Christ's teaching, and shew you that it far transcends the teaching of all others.

1. He teacheth plainly and perspicuously. When he was upon earth, and preached the gospel unto men, he taught them by parables and similitudes, he clothed sublime and spiritual mysteries with earthly metaphors, and thereby adapted them to the low and dull capacities of men, and spake so familiarly about them, as if he had been speaking earthly things. And, according to his own example, he would have his ministers to preach, 'using great plainness of speech,' as the apostle Paul tells us he did, 2 Cor. iii. 12. and 'by manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,' 2 Cor. iv. 2. Yet he does not allow them to be rude and careless in their expressions pouring out rude, indigested, mean, sordid, and methodical words, nauseous and ungrateful to the ears of men. No; a holy, serious, and grave expression suits the lips of Christ's ambassadors. And what man ever spake more weightily, logically, and persuasively, than the apostle Paul, by whose pen Christ hath admonished us to beware of vain ostentation, and swelling words of vanity; but he would have us stoop to the understanding of the meanest, and not to give the people a comment darker than the text. He would have us rather to prick their consciences than tickle their fancies and break their hearts rather than please their ears. Christ was a very plain preacher, and he not only opened truths to the understanding, but opened the understanding also to perceive them. He takes away the veil from the heart, and causes a heavenly light to shine into the soul, and darts a clear beam from heaven into the mind. Christ's teachings are fully satisfying. The soul doubts no more, staggers or hesitates no more; but fully acquiesces in what Christ teaches. It is so well satisfied therewith, that

it can venture all upon the truth of what it hath learned from him.' You may see what is said with respect to this, Prov. viii. 8, 9. 'All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.'

2. Christ teaches fully. He gives us a full and clear revelation of the will of God with respect to all things which concern our happiness, either in this life or in that which is to come. That is spoken of Christ which we have, Psal. xl. 9, 10. 'I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving kindness, and thy truth from the great congregation.' He hath given us a perfect rule of faith and obedience, in nothing defective or superfluous, but comprehending the whole duty of man. The scriptures contain the counsels of God, which he hath graciously sent to redress the miseries of the fall; and therefore it is said by the apostle, Acts xx. 27. 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.' He hath kept nothing back from men that was needful to be known in order to their salvation. Hence saith he, John xv. 15. 'All things that I have heard of my father I have made known unto you.' and it is said, 2 Tim. iii. 15. that 'the holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation.' Christ hath plainly shewed us what course we are to take, that so we may obtain the friendship and favour of God here, and come to the enjoyment of him for ever hereafter. You may see what David says, Psal. cxix. 97. 'O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.' Christ by his word gives us a full discovery of our duty in every state and condition that we can be in while here in the world; and our relative duties are fully revealed. See what is said by the apostle, Tit. ii. 11, 12. 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.'

3. Christ teaches the will of God purely. His doctrine has not the least dash of error mixed with it to allay and debase it. His malicious enemies, who were continually lying

at the catch, and most observant of his words and actions, could find nothing to charge him with. He preached the gospel most purely unto men. He is the true and faithful witness, Rev. i. 5: And he hath commanded his ministers to preserve the simplicity and purity of the gospel, and not to mix and sophisticate it. Hence it is said, 2 Cor. iv. 2. ⁶ We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' And says Paul, 2 Cor. ii. 17. 'We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.' Here the apostle vindicates himself from the practice of false apostles and corrupt teachers, who adulterated the word, and mingled their own errors and inventions with it, and studied to please men more than God, to advance their own temporal interests thereby, more than the salvation and eternal interests of mens souls.

4. He teaches the mind of God in a most sweet and affectionate manner. His words make mens hearts to glow and burn within them, as it was with the two disciples going to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 32. It was prophesied concerning him of old, that 'he should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street,' Isa. xlii. 2. 'The Lord hath given him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' Isa. l. 4. How sweetly did his words slide into the hearts of his hearers? He drew them with the bands of love, and with the cords of a man. See how affectionately he speaks, Matth. xi. 28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' He discouraged none, nor upbraided any from coming to him. He assured them, that all who were willing to come should be heartily welcome, and meet with a gracious reception. His great familiarity and free condescension to the most vile and despicable sinners were often made the matter of his reproach. Such is his gentle and sweet carriage towards his people, that the church is called the Lamb's wife, Rev. xix. 7.

5. He teaches the will of God powerfully. It was observed by the multitudes that flocked about him, that he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes, Matth.

vii. 29. They were but dull and coldrife preachers; their words did freeze as it were between their lips: but Christ spoke with a divine efficacy and power. There was heat as well as light in his doctrine. And so is there still, though it be declared by the mouths of poor, weak, and despised men. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. x. 4. 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,' &c. It is still 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. iv. 12. The holy apostle imitated his great master Christ: being filled with his Spirit, he spake freely and home to the hearts of men. His words made the consciences of sinners to shake and tremble in their breasts: It is true, all faithful and able ministers are not alike gifted in this particular: but yet there is a holy seriousness, a spiritual grace and majesty in their doctrine, commanding reverence and regard from their hearers.

6. Christ teaches the will of God infallibly. The wisest and best of men may mistake; and lead others into the same mistakes with themselves: but it is not so in the teachings of Christ; for they are not subject to error and mistake. His Spirit guideth men into all truth; and into nothing but the truth, John xvi. 13. He is an unerring guide, and a shepherd that will not suffer his sheep to stray and wander to their eternal destruction upon the mountains of sin and vanity. All who are taught of Christ shall certainly arrive at celestial glory: for he hath said, John x. 28. 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' His word is abundantly sufficient to make men wise unto salvation. And saith the apostle, Gal. vi. 16. 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.'

7. The teachings of Christ are abiding teachings. They make deep and indelible impressions upon the soul, which can never wear out. The words of men evanish like smoke, and fly away: but the words of Christ stick close by us. What he teacheth he writeth upon the heart. So it is promised, Jer. xxxi. 33. 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' It is usual with gracious

souls, whose understandings have been savingly opened by the Lord, to say many times afterwards, I shall never forget such a scripture that once convinced me, and such a promise that once encouraged and comforted me. To this purpose it is said by David, Psal. cxix. 93. 'I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me.'

8. Christ teaches men the will of God in a saving manner. They are all made wise to salvation who are taught by him. See what the apostle Paul says of the holy scriptures, which contain this divine revelation, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. 'The holy scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' There is a great deal of other knowledge that goes to hell with men. The pavement of that infernal furnace, as one speaks, is pitched with the skulls of many great scholars. Many who have learned heads, have graceless hearts. But life eternal lies in the teaching of Christ. Hence says our Saviour, John xvii. 3. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' This is deservedly called 'the light of life,' John viii. 12. And 'in this light' men 'clearly see light,' Psal. xxxvi. 9.

You see then, from what hath been said on this head, that Christ's teachings far transcend the teachings of all others; so that it may be justly said of him, as was said by his hearers of old, 'Never man spake like this man.'

IV. I now proceed to shew for what ends Christ as a Prophet reveals the will of God; where I shall touch at the necessity of this revelation in order to salvation.

The end of this revelation is for our salvation. Man by nature is ignorant of true happiness, and of the way that leads to it. But 'the grace of God, that bringeth salvation,' i. e. the glorious gospel of Christ, 'hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' The great design of the gospel-revelation is to shew what course we must steer that so we may escape deserved wrath and misery, and arrive at everlasting happiness and glory. So that now we need not cry out with those of old, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and

how myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Micah vi. 6, 7.

But here it may be inquired, Is not the light of nature sufficient to inform us of the way of salvation?

To this I answer in the negative. This revelation of the will of God which we have by Christ, was needful to be superadded to that, by reason of our natural darkness and blindness of mind. Men by nature know not God; their understandings are darkened through the ignorance that is in them. The whole world is involved in darkness. Though the light of nature tells us that there is a God, and that it is our duty to worship and serve him, yet it cannot teach us how we are to do it, so as to be accepted of him; as is clear in the case of the heathens, of whom it is said, Rom. i. 23. 'They changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.' They debased the adorable Deity, by entertaining unworthy conceptions of him, and performing such acts of worship to him, as were not fit for a rational nature to offer, nor for the holy and glorious Majesty of heaven to receive. Besides, they ascribed his honour and attributes to the creatures; not only to the sun, moon, and stars, and to invisible powers which they supposed governed and ruled these shining luminaries, but even to the most despicable things in nature. Birds, and beasts, and creeping things, were the objects of their adoration. Again, though the light of nature directs us to many excellent moral duties, as to honour our parents, to do to others as we would have them to deal with us, &c. yet it cannot teach us to perform these duties in an acceptable manner. The apostle tells us, that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.' The mind of man by nature hath not only a native blindness, by reason of which it cannot discern the things of the spirit, but also a natural enmity that it hates the light; so that till the mind be healed and enlightened by Christ, the natural faculty can no more discern the things of the Spirit, than the sensitive faculty can discern the things of reason. It is as easy for men to read the law in tables of

stone, after they are pounded and crumbled to dust, as to read true notions in lapsed and corrupt nature. This is excellently described by the apostle Paul, Eph. iv. 17, 18. 'This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' Here he terms it 'vanity of mind, darkness in the understanding, and blindness of heart.' All the essential faculties of the rational soul are entirely corrupted; the mind which is the repository of principles, that noble faculty, whereby we judge of things good and evil; the understanding, that discursive faculty, whereby we collect one thing from another, framing conclusions from the principles of the mind, and reducing these principles into practical dictates; and the heart, i. e. the will, conscience, and affections, which were to apply these principles, and draw out these reasonings on the stage of life; all are corrupted. And the most ingenious nations for natural knowledge and civil prudence verify the apostle's character in their brutish actions. The Egyptians, who were men famous for wisdom and learning, and propagated the sciences to the other parts of the world, were worse than beasts in their worship. The Greeks, who counted their Athens the eye of the world, were not more refined, when they adored thirty thousand gods, and some of them infamous for murder and adultery, and held three hundred and twenty-four different opinions about the chief good, as learned men tell us. And the Romans, though eminent for civil prudence, were not much behind them, when they worshipped a fever, and dignified a strumpet with the title of the Goddess of Flowers. And a great philosopher among them takes notice of their ignorance of God in the various notions which they have of him. Even those among the heathens who for acts of justice and temperance might justly put many men under the gospel to the blush, have had a thick darkness upon their minds in regard of God. But here more particularly I shall shew you several things absolutely necessary to be known in order to salvation, wherein the light of nature is very defective.—
As,

1. The fall of man, which is the first cause and original spring of all our misery and woe. This is what the human

understanding could never find out by its most accurate search and inquiries. For though the heathen philosophers were abundantly sensible of many confusions and disorders in their souls, and of their woful subjection to the rage and tyranny of unruly passions, yet they could never find out the fatal cause, nor trace these streams to the true original. They found indeed that something was amiss, and much amiss too; but from whence this disorder did arise, nature itself is wholly ignorant, and hath not so much as a regular guess without revelation. And though Plato seems to have had some dark notices of man's original and fallen state, when he expresses the one under the symbolic image of the golden age under Saturn's reign, and the other by the miserable iron image under the reign of Jupiter, in which he lived; yet we may warrantably conclude, that he had these discoveries from the scriptures or Jewish tradition. Origin is of opinion, that Plato understood the history of man's fall by his conversation with the Jews in Egypt. This first cause of all our misery is only made known by the scriptures. Men by nature know not the fall of Adam, which is the source and bitter root from which all their woe and trouble springs. And the light of nature is too dim and weak-sighted to pierce into the depths of Iniquity. It cannot acquaint us with the fumes of sin, and with that inward strength and power of it, which gives birth and nourishment to all those irregular actions which flow from it. There was therefore a necessity of some other light to penetrate the clouds of nature, and search into the depths of the belly, and bring to view that habitual disconformity of our natures to that rectitude required of us, and which was once possessed by us.

2. The light of nature cannot acquaint us with the true and adequate object of our religious worship, namely, a Trinity of persons in the glorious Godhead. This sacred doctrine is wholly supernatural, and entirely beyond the reach of the human understanding. The most illuminated Philosophers that ever were in the world, though they found out the causes of many things, and could discourse to excellent purpose concerning the magnitude, motions, and influences of the stars, and the nature of plants and minerals, and many other things which are veiled from vulgar minds, yet they could never by their most accurate search and enquiry find out the mystery of the Trinity. This grand article of the

Christian faith was altogether hid and unknown to them. We find indeed that some of the ancient philosophers had some dark and imperfect traditions concerning the Trinity. Hence some think, that that great Oriental maxim which Pythagoras brought with him into Greece, touching God; viz. that he was *en kai pelu*, that is, one and many, was but some broken Jewish tradition of the Trinity. And the Platonists had also some weak and corrupt traditions of three *hypostases*, or persons, which they called *Trinity*. But these and the like poor notices of the Trinity, it is most probable, Pythagoras first, and Plato after him, derived originally from the Jews, if not immediately, yet immediately by the Phœnicians and Egyptians. But yet neither the Grecian, Egyptian, nor Phœnician philosophers, had any sound and true notion of this great mystery; as will appear clear and evident to any sober mind; that considers what a world of fables and contradictions they mixed with those broken discoveries which they had received concerning it. Plato himself ingenuously confesses this, when he said, that he had received many mysteries from the ancients which he did not understand, but expected some interpreter to unfold them unto him. But we find the gospel sets this mystery in a clear light. See Matth. iii. 17, 18. 1 John v. 7. 2 Cor. xiii, 14. all of which, and other scriptures, were considered when I discoursed on the doctrine of the Trinity. The gospel gives us a clear discovery of the persons in the Godhead, as to their nature and operations, and their combined and distinct acts and expressions of godness. We find they all concur in the work of man's redemption: the Father contrived it, the Son purchased it; and the Holy Ghost applies it.

3: The light of nature cannot inform us of the way and method of our recovery by Christ. The whole scheme of this amazing work of redemption, was without the compass of our most searching faculties. There are three things with respect to this, which I shall touch at a little; and we had never known any of them unless they had been revealed. As,

(1.) The mystery of eternal election. From all eternity God foresaw that man would fall, and thereby plunge himself into an abyss of sin and misery, and that it would not be possible to recover himself out of it, neither could he receive help from any creature in heaven or earth; and God not in-

tending that the whole race of man should perish, and become the eternal trophies of hell, set apart a certain number in his eternal purpose and decree, whom he designed to make vessels of mercy; and bring to the fruition of endless glory, to the everlasting praise of the invincible efficacy of his sovereign grace and rich mercy in Christ. So the apostle teaches us, Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. upon which passage I formerly discoursed in the course of this work. This is indeed a profound mystery, which could never have been discovered by the clearest-sighted reason: but the great Prophet of the church hath revealed it unto us.

(2.) We had never known the astonishing method of redemption, by which the elect are brought into a state of salvation, unless it had been revealed: How that God from all eternity entered into a covenant with his own Son, promising him assistance, a numerous seed, and great dignity and glory; if he would undertake the work of redemption; and free the elect from sin and wrath; whereupon Christ cheerfully condescended, and engaged to become the Sinner's Surety, to pay the debt: he was content to stand in his people's room, and submit himself to the avenging strokes of justice: he was willing to become a curse, that they might receive a blessing; to become poor, that they might be made rich; to be accused and condemned, that they might be justified; and to endure the shock of his Father's wrath, that they might go free. Hence he is brought in by the Psalmist offering himself as Surety in their stead, Psal. xl. 6, 7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me.' He willingly yielded to all the conditions which were required for the accomplishment of that great and difficult work. He was content to take a body, that he might be capable to suffer. The debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant performed, but in the human nature. He was therefore to have a nature capable of and prepared for sufferings. Hence it is said, Heb. x. 5. 'A body hast thou prepared me.' He behoved to have a body to suffer that which was represented by those legal sacrifices wherein God took no pleasure. And he took a body of flesh, surrounded with all the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted. The incarnation of Christ is a great mystery, which could

never have entered into the thoughts either of angels or men, unless it had been brought to light by the gospel. Hence says the apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 16: 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh;' &c. But of this I spoke at large when treating of the incarnation of our Redeemer.

(3.) The light of nature could never tell us, that it is by faith in Christ that we must be saved. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,' John iii. 16. He is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. It is only through faith in Christ that the elect can be saved. All that believe in him are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. We are commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall have everlasting life. Now, this way of salvation is above the strain and reach of natural reason to attain to the knowledge of it. There are some seminal sparks of the law in the hearts of men by nature; some common principles of piety, justice, and charity, without which the world would soon disband, and fall into confusion. But there is not the least conjecture of the contrivance of the gospel. It could never have entered into the thoughts of the Israelites, that by looking to a brazen serpent erected on a pole, the wounds should be healed which they received by the bitings of the fiery serpents. And as little could guilty man find out a way to satisfy divine justice by the death and sufferings of a Mediator, and to heal the wounded spirit by believing on Christ crucified. The most active and inquiring reason could never have thought of the wonders of the incarnation, and that a virgin should conceive, and a God be born. Nor could it have dreamed of the death and sufferings of the Prince of life, and of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord of glory. Now, the human understanding, as bright and clear as it is corrupt, yet it could not, by all the help of argumentation and reasoning, arrive at the knowledge of it. Supernatural revelation was absolutely necessary to discover it to the holy angels. The apostle tells us, Eph. iii. 10. 'Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, is made known by the church the manifold wisdom, of God.' This was a mystery locked up in the breast of God, of which the angels seem to have had no thoughts, till

the revelation of it was made to the church. And even since that discovery, these wise and intelligent beings have not a perfect knowledge of the whole of the gospel-state; for they are still making further enquiries: 'Which things,' says the apostle, 'the angels desire to look into,' 1 Pet. i. 12.

4. The light of nature does not inform men of the evil there is in the first inclinations to sin. The heathen philosophers allowed the disorder of the sensitive appetite to be innocent and harmless, till it pass to the supreme part of the soul, and induces it to deliberate or resolve upon moral actions. For they were ignorant of that original and intimate pollution that cleaves to human nature. And because our faculties are natural, they thought that the first motions to forbidden objects were natural desires, and not the irregularities of lust. Accordingly all their precepts reach no further than the counsels of the heart; but the desires and motions of the lower faculties, though very culpable, are left by them indifferent. So that it is quite evident, that there are many stains and defilements in their purgative virtues. The law of God requires holiness and purity in all the habits and dispositions of the soul, an entire conformity to the will of God in all its various motions and actings; or else we can never be happy: for the scripture tells us, that he must have clean hands and a pure heart, that would ascend into the hill of God, and stand in his holy place; and that it is only the pure in heart that shall see God.

5. The light of nature and philosophy, improved to the highest height, is very defective in respect of piety, and in many things contrary to it; as will appear from the following particulars.

(1.) By delivering unworthy notions and conceptions of the Deity. Not only the vulgar heathens changed the truth of God into a lie, when they measured his immense and incomprehensible perfections by the narrow compass of their shallow imaginations: but the most renowned philosophers among them highly dishonoured God by their base and unbecoming apprehensions of him. For the true notion of God signifies a being infinite, independent, the universal Creator and powerful Preserver of heaven and earth, and the absolute Director of all events; that his providence superintends and takes notice of all the motions and actions of his creatures;

and that he is a liberal rewarder of those that seek him, and a just revenger of those that violate his holy and righteous laws. Now, all this was contradicted by some of them. Some asserted the world to be eternal, and others that matter was so, and in that denied him to be the first cause of all things. Some limited his being, confining him to one of the poles of heaven; others extended it only to the amplitude of the world. The Epicureans totally denied his governing providence, and made him an idle spectator of things here below. They maintained and asserted, that God was contented with his own majesty and glory; and that whatever was without him, was neither in his thoughts nor care; as if to be employed in the various accidents of the world were inconsistent with his own felicity. Thus, by confining his power who is infinite, they denied him in confessing him. There were others who allowed him to regard the great affairs of kingdoms and nations, and to manage crowns, and sceptres, and matters of state; but to stoop so low as to regard particular things, they judged to be as unbecoming the divine nature, as for the sun to descend from the firmament to light a candle for a servant in the dark. They took the sceptre out of God's hand, and set up a foolish and blind power to dispose of all mutable things. Some again made him a servant to nature, that he necessarily turned the spheres. Others subjected him to an invincible destiny, that he could not do what he desired. And thus the wisest of the heathens dishonoured the Deity by their false imaginations of him; and, instead of representing him with his proper attributes, drew a picture of themselves.

(2.) Philosophy and Nature's light is very defective as to piety, in not injoining the love of God. The first and great command of the law is this, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and strength.' Yet these philosophers speak little or nothing of this, which is the principal part of natural religion. Aristotle, for as clear-sighted as he was in other things, yet when he discourses of God, is not only affectedly obscure to conceal his ignorance, but even in his morals, where he had reason to consider the Deity as an object most worthy of our love and obedience in an infinite degree, he totally omits such a representation of him, though the love of God is that alone which gives value and price to all other virtues. And this is the reason why philosophy is

so defective as to rules for preparing men for an intimate and delightful communion with God, which is the effect of holy and perfect love, and the supreme happiness of the reasonable nature. And if, in the Platonic philosophy there are some things directing to this, yet they are but coldly expressed, and so dark and obscure, that, like inscriptions on ancient medals or marbles which are defaced, they are hardly legible. It is the singular character of the gospel, which distinguishes it from all human institutions, that it represents the infinite amiableness of God and his beauty and goodness to us, to excite and draw out our affections to him in a superlative manner. It commands us to follow him as dear children, and presses us to seek for those gracious dispositions which may qualify us for the enjoyment of him in a way of friendship and love.

(3.) The best philosophers laid down this servile and pernicious maxim, That a wise man should always conform to the religion of his country. Socrates, who acknowledged one supreme God, yet advised his friends to comply with the common idolatry, without any difference in the outward worship of him and creatures; and those who did otherwise he branded as superstitious and vain. And his own practice was according to this advice which he had given; for he frequented the temples, and assisted at the sacrifices, which he declared before his judges, to purge himself of the crime of which he was accused. And Seneca, speaking of the Heathen worship, acknowledges that it was unreasonable, and only the multitude of fools made it excusable: yet he would have a philosopher to conform to these customs, in obedience to the law, not as pleasing to the gods. Thus they made religion a dependant on the state. They performed the rights of Heathenish superstition, that were either filthy, fantastical, or cruel, such as the devil, the master of these ceremonies, ordained. They became less than men by worshipping the most vile and despicable creatures; and therefore God gave them up to the vilest lusts, carnal impurity being a just punishment of spiritual. Rom. i. 23, 24.

(4.) Philosophy is very defective in not propounding the glory of God as the chief and ultimate end to which all our actions should refer. Now, the philosophers had other views and designs than this, in their precepts and dictates. As,

[1.] To make use of virtue as a means to gain honour and

reputation in the world. This was plainly discovered in their books and actions. They were sick of self-love, and did many things to satisfy the eye. They led their lives as in a scene, where one person is within, and another is represented without, by an artificial imitation of what is true. They were swelled with presumption in having little merit, and a great deal of vanity. Now, this respect which men have to the opinion of others, corrupts the intention and vitiates the action. It is not sincere virtue, but a superficial appearance, that is regarded; for it is sufficient to that purpose to seem to be virtuous without being so. And from hence he may discover that many of their most specious actions were but disguised sins; their virtues were as false as their deities. Or,

[2.] The end of philosophy was to prevent the many mischiefs which licentiousness and disorders might bring upon men from without, or to preserve peace and tranquillity within, by suppressing the turbulent passions arising from lust or rage, which trouble and discompose the mind. This was the pretended design of Epicurus, to whom virtue was amiable only as the instrument of pleasure. Or,

[3.] The highest design of philosophy was to propound and expose to view the beauty of virtue, and its charming aspect, as the most worthy motive to draw and influence the affections. Now, supposing that some of the heathens (though very few), by discovering the internal beauty of virtue, were taken with, and had a love to it, and performed some things without any private respect, but for the rectitude of the action, and the inward satisfaction that springs from it; yet they were still defective; for virtue is but a ray of the Deity; and our duty is not complete, unless it be referred to his glory, who is the principle and pattern of it. In short, the great Creator made man for himself: and it is most just and reasonable, that as his favour is our sovereign happiness, so his glory should be our supreme end, without which nothing is regular and truly beautiful.

From all which the necessity of Christ's teaching, and of a divine revelation, clearly appears.

But I must conclude this subject with some improvement.

1. From this doctrine we may infer the continual necessity of a standing ministry. Christ is gone into heaven, and will continue there until the time of the restitution of all things;

but by his ministers and ambassadors he daily teaches and instructs us, and for that purpose hath fixed them in the church by a firm and lasting constitution, which shall remain to the end of the world, Matth. xxviii, 19, 20. This is a great and valuable privilege, which we ought highly to prize, and carefully to improve. This alone is sufficient to counterbalance the greatest outward affliction that people can meet with in the world; and therefore we have that promise, Isa. xxx. 20. 'Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.'

2. The most rude and ignorant may be taught, seeing Christ executes the office of a Teacher. He can teach the most stupid, and give them an understanding to know the truths of the gospel. Therefore ignorance can be no excuse to gospel-hearers, to whom Christ offers himself as a Teacher. Let the most ignorant among you apply to him, and he will teach you more than the most accomplished philosophers could ever attain by all their improvements of natural light.

3. The weakest Christians need not be discouraged at the dulness and incapacity which they find in themselves; for Christ can easily reveal that to babes which is hid from the wise and prudent: 'The testimonies of the Lord are sure (says the Psalmist), making wise the simple.' Yea, the Lord delights to chuse such as you are, that his grace may appear the more conspicuous in your weakness, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. Well then, weak but serious Christian, be not discouraged, because you are not so docile and quick in your apprehensions of things as others about you. Many of your neighbours may know more in other things than you do; but you are not incapable of knowing so much as is necessary to the salvation of your soul, and shall certainly know it, if Christ be your Teacher; and that is sufficient to make you happy for ever. Others indeed may far excel you in the knowledge of other things: but if you know Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in Jesus, one drop of your knowledge is more valuable and desirable than a whole sea of their natural and political knowledge. One precious truth sucked from the breast of Christ by faith and prayer, is infinitely better than ten thousand dry notions, hewn out by racking and torturing the understanding.

4. Prayer is a proper means for the increase of knowledge. Prayer is the golden key that unlocks that sacred treasure. When Daniel was to expound that secret which was contained in the king's dream, about which the Chaldean magicians had racked their brains to no purpose, you see he addressed God by Prayer, Dan. ii. 17, 18. and you see there what success he had, the secret was revealed to him. Luther was wont to say, Three things made a divine, viz. meditation, temptation, and prayer. And a holy man in our neighbouring nation was wont to study upon his knees. And indeed those truths which are got by prayer leave an unusual sweetness upon the heart. In the use of means you should have your eyes towards Christ, and pray that he would open your understandings, and enlighten your minds with saving knowledge. This was David's practice. See Psal. cxix. 18, 23, 34.

5. Learn from this what entertainment ye are to give to the word. Be not strangers to your Bibles; but read them as Christ's word to you, with reverence, faith, and love. Make conscience of attending on the preaching of the word, catechising, and the dispensing of the sacraments; and set yourselves to drink up the doctrine of Christ from himself, as your Teacher. If people believed that Christ were exercising his prophetical office among them in that way, they would not dare to treat these exercises as they do.

6. See here the abomination of the Quakers and other enthusiasts, who separate the Spirit from the word. To these may be added those who take up principles without ground from the word, upon the credit of dreams, visions, voices, and impressions. And much more those who do so upon their own light fancies, without serious examination of them by the word. The practices of all such are an abomination to the Lord; they act in direct opposition to Christ as the great Teacher sent from God; and consequently the light that is in them is darkness.

7. See also the abomination of formalists and legal professors, who know nothing of religion but *Do, do*. Being unacquainted with a due sense of their own emptiness and darkness in spiritual things, and with the way of making use of Christ as a Prophet, they content themselves with the word without the Spirit, and what they can hammer out of it on their own anvil, so separating the word from the Spirit,

And thus they live ignorant of the Spirit's irradiations on the word, and his clearing up scripture-truths to them; which are only had in the way of the soul's going out of itself and its own wisdom to Christ, in a way of believing and depending on him for influences of light and knowledge. This is the neck-break and ruin of many in our day.

8. Wo to them; then, that have the teaching of the word without the Spirit. Ah! do men think nothing to hear so much, and to be illuminated by the Spirit in nothing? Christ may be a Prophet to others, but he cannot be one to such. Let them seriously consider that awful passage, 2 Cor. iv. 3. 4. 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.'

9. Receive Christ as a Prophet, and learn to make use of him daily as such: Renounce your own wit and wisdom, and receive instruction from the mouth of this divine Teacher: who teaches to profit. Be of a docible disposition, willing and inclined to be taught of God: for the meek will he teach his way. And, for the Lord's sake, refuse not to hearken to the voice of this great Prophet, otherwise it will be your ruin. Consider the awful certification in the 23d verse of the chapter where our text lies, 'And it shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.' Hear him, then, and 'beware lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish,' Acts xiii. 40, 41.

10. *Lastly*, Would you know if ye be taught of God? I offer you the following marks.

(1.) Christ's teachings are very humbling to the soul. Human knowledge puffeth up; but divine knowledge abaseth and casteth down. It empties a man of all conceit of his own worth, and fills him with low and abasing thoughts of himself. So it was with Job, chap. xlii. 5, 6. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself; and repent in dust and ashes.' The same light of the Spirit which discovers unto us the glorious greatness and majesty of God, and his other shining perfections, discovers also, at the same time, the vileness, baseness, emptiness and utter unworthiness of man,

yea of the best and holiest of men, as in the case of Isaiah, chap. vi. 5. 'Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' When Paul got a saving sight of Christ, he calls himself the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners. Were you ever deeply humbled before the Lord, and made to see your own emptiness and vileness? Those who are puffed up with pride and self-conceit, are strangers to the teaching of Christ.

(2.) The teachings of Christ deeply affect and impress the heart. They fully reach the soul of a sinner, Hos. ii. 14. 'I will speak comfortably unto her;' or, as in the original, 'I will speak to her heart.' When Christ sheweth unto men the great evil and danger of sin, he so convinceth and toucheth the soul, that no creature-comforts can yield any pleasure or sweetness, but prove all tasteless and insipid, and have no more pleasure than the white of an egg. And when he speaks peace to the soul, and intimates the pardon of sin, he so comforts and refreshes it, that no afflictions or pressures, however heavy and uneasy, have any weight or bitterness in them at all. One drop of consolation from heaven sweetens a whole sea of trouble upon earth, and fills the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Says the Psalmist, Psal. xciv. 19. 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.'

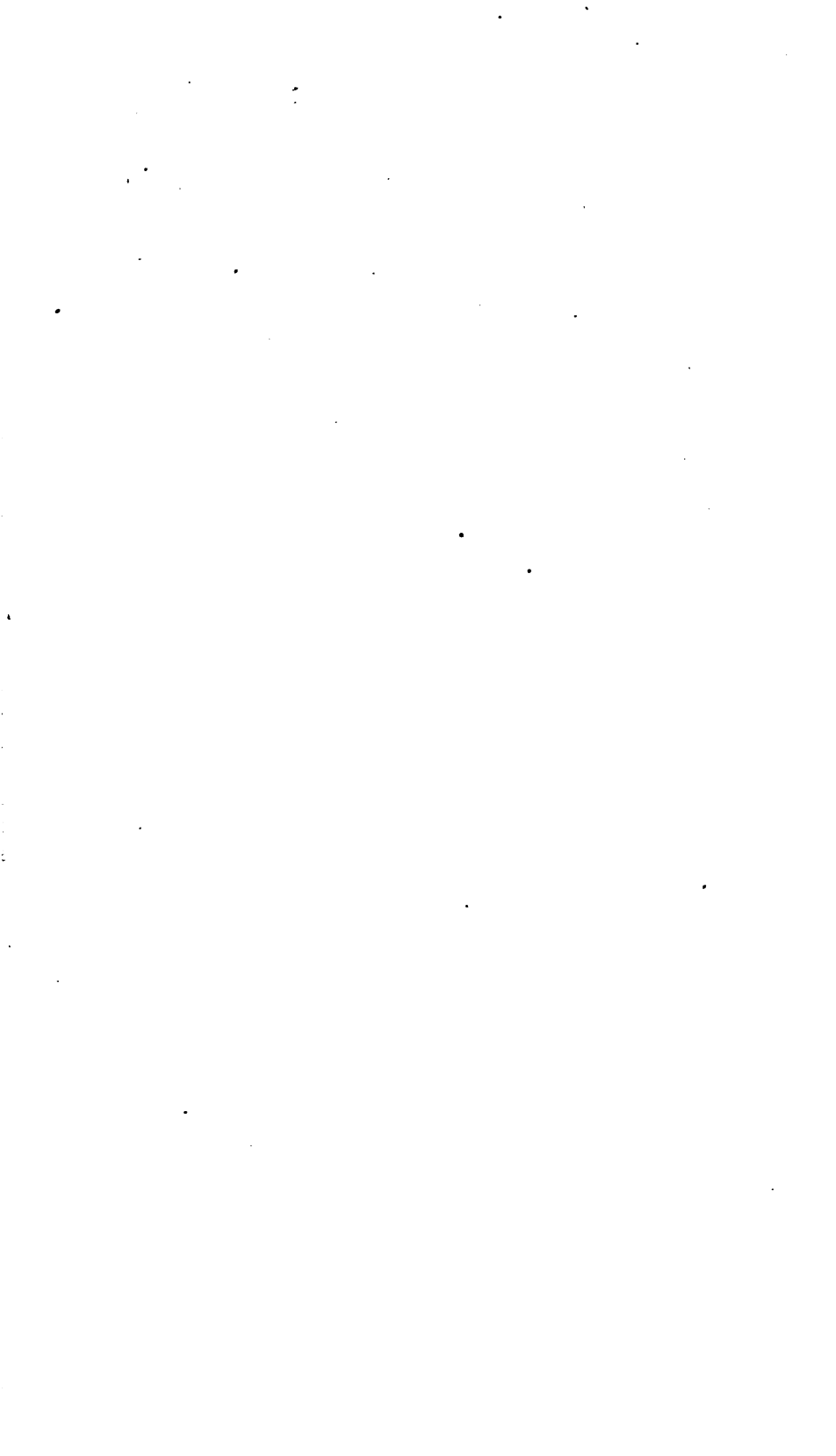
(3.) The teachings of Christ are sanctifying and renewing: they change and reform the heart, Eph. iv. 21, 22, 23. 'If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.' You see here that holiness and purity is the effect of divine teaching; holiness both external and internal, negative and positive. All the discoveries of God which Christ makes to the soul have an assimilating quality, and change it into his own likeness, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(4.) All Christ's teachings are practical, issuing in cheerful obedience. Idle notions and useless speculations are not learned from Christ. As his creating words, so his teaching words, are always attended with effect. As when he said, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' so when he says

to a soul, Be thou humbled, it is effectually humbled; as in the case of Job, chap. xl. 4, 5. 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.' And when he says, Be thou comforted, it is immediately comforted, Isa. lxvi. 13. 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.'

(5.) Christ's teachings are always agreeable to the written word. The Spirit of Christ and the word of Christ do never jar, as John. xiv. 26. 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' When he speaks to the heart of a sinner, whether in a way of conviction, instruction, or consolation, he either makes use of the express words of scripture, or speaks to the heart in a language every way agreeable thereunto. So that the written word becomes the standard and touchstone to weigh and try all doctrines by, Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Whatever differs from the scriptures of truth, must not pass for an inspiration of God, but is a deluding sophism and insinuation of the devil.

(6.) You will have a great love to your teacher, and will be in case to say with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,' Psal. lxxiii. 25.









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